

*The
Bells of
St. Stephen's*



Marian Keith

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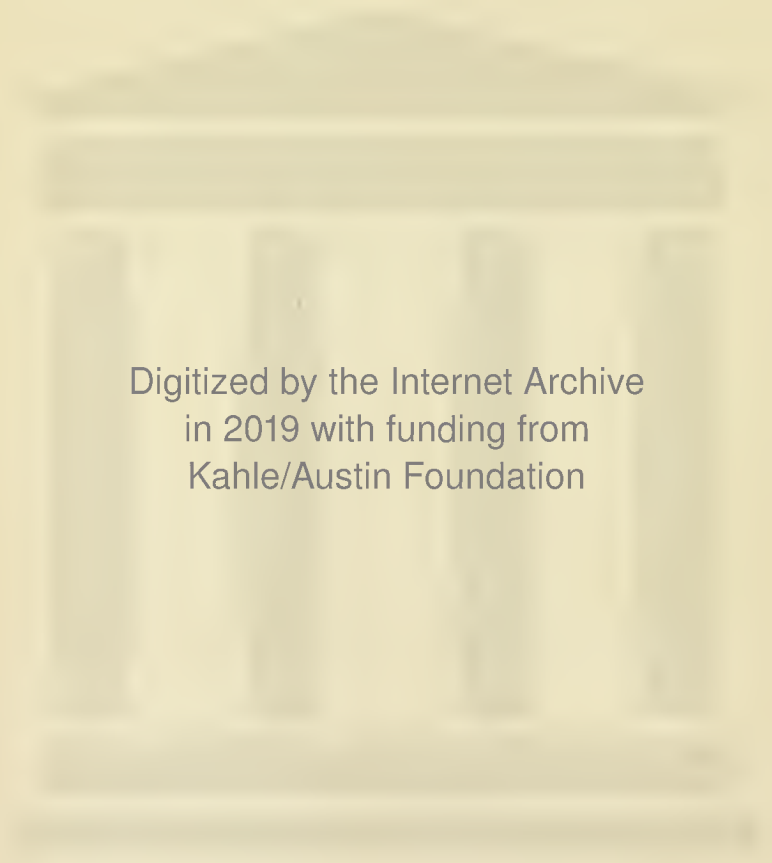


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THE BELLS OF ST. STEPHEN'S

BY

MARIAN KEITH

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE MISS MELODY," "IN ORCHARD
GLEN," "THE SILVER MAPLE," "TREASURE
VALLEY," ETC.

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THE BELLS OF ST. STEPHEN'S. I

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THE BELLS OF ST. STEPHEN'S

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CHAPTER I

THE MINISTER

AT exactly half-past two every afternoon, the minister of St. Stephen's opened the gate of the manse garden, and walked down the street to the post office for his afternoon mail. So regular was he in this habit that the people on the Avenue could almost tell the time of day by his going, as though he were the sun. And Mrs. Harding, who lived a few gardens above, and who was an invalid suffering severely from too much money and nothing to do, often timed her afternoon arrangements by him, as she watched him from her high tower-like room.

"There goes Dr. Sutherland," she would say. "It must be time for my nap." Or, "Dr. Sutherland has just come back, I'd better have my drops."

The Doctor was justly proud of his punctuality. In his twenty-five years' pastorate in St. Stephen's he had never once been late for a service; a great

achievement in a town where no one thought of going to a lecture, concert or other entertainment until at least fifteen minutes past the hour advertised. Directly after the mid-day meal, which his housekeeper placed upon the table exactly at twelve o'clock, Dr. Sutherland took a ten-minute nap, waking promptly at the whistle of the early afternoon train that brought the mail up from the cities to the south. Then he sat down to his desk for another hour's work on his sermon. A half-hour had to be allowed to give Jimmie Marshall time to drive leisurely from the station with the mail bags, and another half-hour for the postmaster to get the mail distributed among the citizens' boxes. Then the Doctor lifted the little key of his box from the hook above his desk where it always hung, took his cane and his hat and, at exactly half-past two, stepped out of the house, through the garden, and away down the elm-lined street.

But upon this bright spring afternoon he was delayed fully twenty minutes, and thus put Mrs. Harding's nap late and completely upset her nerves.

He had just placed the loose leaves of his half-written sermon in the drawer and was reaching for his key, when there came a familiar peremptory tap upon the door. Mrs. McTavish had been housekeeper at the manse for over two years, and knew and respected its master's habits. Something very important, he knew, was causing her to interrupt him

at this hour. He called to her to come in, standing, his tall thin frame stooping over his desk, his long hands spread out over the blotter. He looked at her over his spectacles with kindly anxious eyes.

"Is anybody ill, Mrs. McTavish?" he asked.

Mrs. McTavish shut the door behind her and cleared her throat ominously. Though she was stout and comfortable-looking, with a large, round, pink face, she had a drooping mouth and prominent eyes, that somehow gave her the appearance of the bearer of evil tidings. Just now her manner suggested that she was about to announce the sudden death of half the congregation.

"There's nobody jist at death's door," she admitted with apparent reluctance; "but I'll be wantin' to see ye right away on rail important beesness."

The minister glanced up regretfully at his little key. Long servitude under many housekeepers had made him humble and apologetic in the presence of one, but he knew from tedious experience that Mrs. McTavish never reached her subject, no matter how important, except by way of lengthy and wearisome detours. He made a feeble effort to escape.

"I suppose it wouldn't do after I come back with the mail?" he suggested timidly.

Mrs. McTavish was firm. "No; it'll have to be sattled now." She held up a letter. "I'll be wantin' ye to mail this, mebby," she added mysteriously.

The minister sat down with a sigh of resignation.

"Certainly, certainly, Mrs. McTavish," he said patiently. "Sit down; sit down."

His housekeeper seated herself upon the sofa and spread out her snowy apron nervously.

"It's not jist all about beesness," she said, pleating the crisp hem of her apron. "I had a latter yisterday from my son, Jamie. He went out last spring to Manitoby, ye mind, and he's got an offer of a grand place with Johnny Menzies, Katie Gilbreath's boy. Johnny an' a cousin o' his on the Menzies' side went into partnership, an' when they needed an extry man they wrote to my Jamie. We used to live jist across the concession from Katie's folk and her father an' my man were sacond cousins. Katie's mother was a Fraser from the town line and Teeny Fraser married on a McTavish——"

They were away on high gear down the sloping road of Mrs. McTavish's fluency: a long lane that had many a turning and reached its ending only after weary miles.

The minister's eye, roving around in search of something that would help tide him over the wide spaces that must be travelled before the subject was really introduced, caught a paragraph in the *British Weekly*, which he had missed in his morning's reading.

"To those of us who are somewhat burdened by modesty there is something little short of scandalous in the philosophic suggestion that——"

"There wasn't a buddy in the township of Oro that could beat me hookin' a mat; an' they wes all jist fightin' to get my patterns the time o' the Show when all the prizes——"

"Other souls may be better equipped, and may get nearer to absolute truth——"

"But if there wes anybuddy who could keep a house tidier and spicier than me, I'd like to set eyes on them, that's all——"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. McTavish, yes, indeed," said her absent audience, vaguely conscious that something was required of it in the way of applause.

"We have lost the spring of youth, its verve, its enthusiasms. But however this may be, the fact remains unchallenged that——"

"Lots o' weemin in my place would be here-away, there-away, lattin' iverything go, but if anybuddy could point a finger at me——"

"Yes, yes, Mrs. McTavish, I've no doubt they would, I've no doubt they would." The Doctor's vague comment did not interrupt either Mrs. McTavish or Claudius Clear.

"An' it's not that I'll be wantin' to leave, for nobuddy can say I haven't served ye faithful for three year come next Thanksgiving, but there's things that no salf-respectin' buddy can abide."

The car stopped with a jerk. The passenger awoke, startled. He had missed all the winding road that had led to this destination; but it appeared

that he had arrived at the amazing conclusion that poor Mrs. McTavish was in trouble of some sort, and, in consequence, was about to leave. Dr. Sutherland had suffered much at the hands of many housekeepers, and Mrs. McTavish was undoubtedly the best in years. She was fussy and talkative—"chatty" she called it—but she was a good cook and a tidy housekeeper. Above all she had a profound respect for his study and never meddled with his desk.

"Oh, Mrs. McTavish, what is this I hear? You are not going to leave, are you? Does James really need you?"

Mrs. McTavish could not help looking slightly annoyed. The Doctor was absent-minded, to be sure, but he might at least have given her his attention on this occasion. He had apparently not caught any hint of the real reason for her threatened resignation.

"It isn't that Jamie needs me exactly," she said, fixing her large prominent eyes on the carpet. She stopped and sighed.

The minister of St. Stephen's was the most kindly and sympathetic of men. He caught the note of offended dignity in his housekeeper's tone.

"Is there something worrying you, Mrs. McTavish?" he asked kindly. "Has anything gone wrong about the house?"

Mrs. McTavish fumbled for her handkerchief.

It came out at last from some secret compartment in her gown, neatly folded. She examined it carefully.

"Indeed, an' if it isna worryin' for a respectable buddy to have all the church folk sayin' things about her, then——"

"Saying things?" asked the minister helplessly.

"Ay." Mrs. McTavish's carefully cultivated English fell from her like a loose garment when she was excited. "Dye ye no ken whit they're sayin' about us?" she asked, giving him a glance which was half shrewd enquiry, half something that might almost be termed coquetry.

"About us?" asked the bewildered man.

Mrs. McTavish unfolded the handkerchief tearfully. "That's jist whit's drivin' me away. It's no wise-like for a respectable weeda-woman to stay on here when all the folk in the kirk are sayin' that we're like to be marrit."

The minister of St. Stephen's was conscious of an overwhelming sensation, such as he had felt only once in his life before. It was some thirty-five years earlier, when, as a college Half-back, he had gone forging down the intercollegiate field and met with fearful impact sheer in the pit of his stomach the cannon-ball head of the enemy Forward. This time, as before, he crumpled up under the blow.

For the first time in his life he really looked at his housekeeper. If, at any time during the two

years she had served him faithfully, he had been asked to describe her, he would have been at a loss. He gazed at her thin, colourless hair, neat and smooth; at her round, pink face with its small nose and large pale eyes; and there rose before his memory a vision of the lovely, gracious lady who had once been the head of his home, and in whose early grave he had buried all his youthful heart. Looking around for some means of escape his eye lighted upon his little key still hanging from its hook. He reached for it as a drowning man reaches for an outstretched hand.

Mrs. McTavish was still talking. "It would be Mistress Harding up yonder that would be talkin' about it jist yisterday. An' I says to her, I says, 'Well, Mistress Harding,' I says, 'Who's sayin' it?' I says. An' says she, 'Dear me, Mistress McTavish,' says she, 'Iverybody in St. Stephen's is sayin' it,' ses she. An' I ses till her, I ses, 'Well, there must be a good many leears in St. Stephen's then, Mistress Harding,' I ses. An' Mistress Harding, she ses, ses she, 'Indeed, they can't be all leears, Mistress McTavish,' ses she. 'There must be some o' them tellin' the truth,' ses she."

The minister rose hurriedly. "Ah, well, Mrs. McTavish," he said, "we know, don't we? And we'll just make them all *leears* this time."

He caught up his hat and stick and, entirely forgetting the fateful letter he was to mail, stumbled

hurriedly out of the front door. When Dr. Sutherland was very much excited or perturbed he was apt to lapse into the broad Scots that had been his childhood's language.

"Eh, losh preserve us!" he cried, wiping his brow, and there was more of a prayer in it than an ejaculation.

The little town of Wawashene was situated upon three-clad hills that rose terrace-like from the shore of a pretty lake. On one of the highest hills stood the old red-brick church of St. Stephen's, lifting its square tower above the tree tops. The old red brick manse was next to it, and both were set at the end of a street—a picturesque double line of drooping elms that stretched away down the little hills to the sparkling blue of the lake. Fortunately Wawashene was not yet sufficiently up-to-date to dispense with the lovely old fashion of fenced gardens, and the Manse was shut off from the street by an old iron railing and a barberry hedge which already bore the little red-green leaves of early spring. There was a pretty latticed walk leading down to the street but the minister did not follow it as was his custom. He felt he could not bear the eyes of Mrs. Harding and all the other gossips of all the other windows. He shrank from giving pain to a fellow mortal as others shrink from physical violence, and he had hurt his own kindly spirit in the late humiliating encounter.

So he turned and took sanctuary in the back garden where a little gate led into the church yard.

Long before the Wawashene mills had made the town the thriving place it was, the green enclosure behind St. Stephen's had been used as a burying ground, and many of the fathers of the church still slept there in the shadows of the building they had toiled so hard to erect.

The minister stepped reverently along the path beside the green mounds with their leaning grey tombstones. The April sunshine streamed down upon them through the tiny leaves of the maples. He loved this peaceful green nook, hushed and withheld from the street. He stood for a few moments trying to gain some of its serenity. All the sordid meanness of life, the unkind gossip, the petty trials of the day, became insignificant in this atmosphere surrounding the quiet dead. Things temporal grew shadowy and unreal; that which is eternal took its rightful place. It was not the first time the minister of St. Stephen's had come here to get his world re-adjusted.

As he passed slowly around the church towards the street, he paused before an open door leading into the church parlours. A cloud of dust was pouring out into the sunshine, and something else borne on its tide: a steady flow of vituperation was issuing from the place whence should come the odour of sanctity. Old Andy McWhirter, the janitor, was

an upright man and true, who kept the church clean and neat. But he had one great weakness. He was given to expressing his views on the trials of a janitor's life as he went about his work, regardless of who was listening. He would have been scandalised at the thought of anyone using a profane word within the bounds of St. Stephen's, but though his vocabulary was pure, his outpourings had all the fire and colour of violent profanity. His chief trial was a meeting of the ladies of the congregation. Andy did not approve of women's organisations. He considered the Ladies' Aid Society and kindred institutions superfluous; gotten up merely for the purpose of giving janitors more work and criticising what they had already done.

It was his custom to act as though the minister shared his feelings and, during any unusual activity on the part of the feminine portion of the congregation, he would approach his chief with an air of commiseration and enquire in solicitous tones, "How are ye standin' it, Doctor?" or, "Well, well, this can't last much longer, Doctor, jist keep up yer heart."

To-day the Women's Missionary Society was holding a special meeting; so Andy was under the necessity of giving the church parlour an extra sweeping. And as his broom scourged the unoffending floor, his tongue kept pace with an outpouring on the utter

uselessness and superfluity of the female of the species.

On many occasions the good Doctor had wrestled with his man over his besetting sin, but this afternoon he felt it strangely soothing to his nerves. He had a guilty feeling that he ought to be shocked, that it was his duty to step behind the cloud of dust and reprove the sweeper. But instead he tip-toed away. And as he retreated there floated after him in refreshing floods:

“Weemin! *Tod!* Whit wes the Almighty thinkin’ aboot that He made so many o’ the cratur’s? It’s weemin here! An’ weemin there! An’ weemin yonder! Weemin everywhere but in their hame! Ay! Oh, no! They canna bide at hame an’ raise their bairns; they must be fleein’ hereaway, thereaway, hither an’ skither, raisin’ the deil!”

Dr. Sutherland felt almost cheered. It was as though McWhirter had administered a tonic. He walked away briskly, swinging his cane, fearless of even the eyes that looked out from Mrs. Harding’s tower room.

CHAPTER II

MARY TO THE RESCUE

THE Doctor left the pretty gardens and houses of the hill-tops and went away down the elm-lined street towards the business section of the town. The lake smiled up at him, dazzling blue and silver under the sunny spring skies. From one street-corner he caught a glimpse of the long white sandy point that stretched far out into the lake where the little river Wawa entered. Its darker green-brown waters were almost covered with a boom of logs. Down there by the river's mouth stood the big saw mill that had given Wawashene her name. Plumes of smoke rose up from the valley, and the ceaseless song of the saws as they tore their way through the great timbers. It came up to the hills softened by the distance into pure music, high and sweet, or deep and booming; a great industrial orchestra, playing the funeral march of the forests, and the greater symphony of the homes soon to be built.

The houses grew smaller as the minister descended, the unpaved streets muddy. But the smiles that greeted him on all sides were not diminished.

He was one of the most familiar figures in the town and one of the best beloved. Always he had a pleasant word for one and all, but to-day he could not quite rise to meet the gay sallies that awaited him. He passed the fire-hall, with its high red tower, where a painted clock-face eternally indicated the hour of three. So that the little town was like the Lotus Isle where

“It seemed always afternoon.”

“Guess somebody in the congregation’s pretty sick,” said Wat Watson, sitting out in front of the hall, cleaning harness. Ordinarily the Doctor would call across the street, “How’s the fire business to-day, Wat?” and the town watchman would answer with some witticism about its being too cold or too hot for a fire. Then the minister would reply that he’d better get out and raise the wind, and the wide spaces of the fire hall would resound with laughter long after he had passed. But to-day there was no exchange of pleasantries, the minister waved his stick in greeting and passed on.

There was only one man in his congregation in whom he could confide his trouble. His best friend, Dr. Peterson, lived on the edge of the region known as “Down Town,” just around the corner from Main Street. Dr. Peterson’s house, like all the other houses, was set back from the street in a fenced garden. But his office was built on to the side and jutted out till

its front door almost opened upon the sidewalk. It looked like a long arm stretched out to the street and was typical of the Doctor's useful, helpful life as the chief family physician of Wawashene. A horse and a very muddy buggy, standing at the office door, told that the Doctor had not yet left for his afternoon visits. His itinerary would probably lie within the radius of a half-dozen blocks; but Dr. Peterson never walked if he could help it, though he frequently prescribed the exercise for his patients.

Dr. Sutherland raised his stick and gave three heavy knocks upon the door. He felt that it would be a great relief to unburden his soul to his friend. The door flew open and the Doctor, his old worn satchel in his hand, filled up the doorway. He was extremely stout and very red in the face, but his movements were as quick and his step as light as a boy's.

"Good day, Doctor, good day," he cried, shoving his satchel under the seat and untying his horse. "I hope you're not going to make a pastoral visitation on me to-day. I haven't time to confess my sins."

"I've no doubt it would take some time," replied his pastor.

"Get in and I'll drive you to the postoffice and tell you all I can remember on the way." The Doctor climbed into the buggy with the lightness and agility of youth.

But this was the one subject upon which they disagreed. Dr. Sutherland walked whenever he had

the opportunity; Dr. Peterson never set foot to the ground if a horse or a car were available.

"What! When I've just come out for a walk? I'm thankful to be able to say that I have not yet, like some whom I had considered my contemporaries, reached such an advanced state of senility that I cannot use my legs."

The Doctor took up the reins. "Tut, tut, man! Remember that the Scripture saith the Lord taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man. You are really suffering from pride and consuming jealousy because I have a fast driver and you haven't any."

As Dr. Peterson's old mare was as slow as her master was smart, the two old friends broke into laughter over the joke, Dr. Sutherland in his silent gasping fashion, Dr. Peterson in a violent outburst that shook the buggy and suggested immense reserves of laughter struggling to get out and threatening to explode and blow up the good Doctor altogether.

"How are the McCanns?" asked the minister when he had recovered.

Dr. Peterson's face grew suddenly grave. "Bad, bad. Sam's at death's door. The whole family is down now, and the Carters have it too. The whole of that abominable place ought to be burned to the ground and I hope the Lord will send a good cleansing fire some day and dry it up. Why, that whole street has been like the Atlantic Ocean all spring.

There's bound to be a plague there; all the cellars are lying in stagnant water. I wish you'd give Douglas a call when you're passing and see what you can get him to do in the way of cleaning up. It's murder in the first degree for him to have his people living down there like cattle. You put it up to him, will you? He'll do anything for you."

The Doctor drove away as fast as his old horse would move, one end of the buggy seat sagging with his weight, the other tipped up at a perilous angle.

Dr. Sutherland walked on briskly. Just to meet his old friend and hear him laugh was exhilarating, but to find a bit of needy work at hand was enough to restore him completely. He turned down Main Street and stopped at the door of a handsome office building. It had gold letters on the plate glass window announcing that the Douglas and Clarkson Lumber Company did business within. The minister walked in as was his custom. He went down a hall, past rooms filled with the clicking of typewriters, and paused at a door marked private. He tapped lightly, then opened the door and put his head in.

"Are you too busy for a pastoral visitation to-day, Graham," he asked.

The young man at the desk whirled round and came out of his chair with a hand outstretched and a welcoming smile.

"Never too busy for that!" he cried. "It's a treat

to have someone drop in who won't talk business. Sit down, Doctor. How is the world using you?"

"The world is too much with me, late and soon," he quoted; "and with all of us, my boy," he added, smiling.

"And the flesh and the devil too," added the other. "The latter has been busy amongst the men, and half-a-dozen are off with sickness and everything running overtime."

Graham Douglas was a man of middle height, strong and good looking. He was in his early thirties, but looked older. While he was not yet twenty-five he had been left with the Wawashene mills on his youthful hands. To be sure they had not then been the big concern they were now, but the fact that the business had been doubled under his guidance had added many years to those time had already given him. He was now head of the firm of Douglas and Clarkson, a wealthy man, a recognised figure in the mercantile world and, incidentally, the shining goal of all the mothers of the town who had marriageable daughters. Business kept him so close that he had made very few friends as the years went on, but he always kept up the old friendship with Dr. Sutherland which his father had bequeathed him.

The minister often appealed to him for help in the charitable undertakings of St. Stephen's and always met with a generous response. But to-day he hesi-

tated. He had known Graham Douglas since he was a thoughtful little boy in his Sunday school, and yet he wondered sometimes if he really knew him. More than two thirds of the young man's life was spent in the making of money and that side of life was a sealed book to the minister.

"It's a big load you carry, Graham. I wonder how you do it, and I hesitate to trouble you, but it was just about those sick folk I came to speak."

The younger man smiled and reached for his cheque-book.

"What's the price?" he asked genially.

The minister raised his hand. "No, it's not that sort of help I want. I think they have all the attention that money can give; but I wonder if anyone has looked into the condition of the men's houses lately. Dr. Peterson says that the cellars have water in them and that the diphtheria is spreading."

He paused. He could not help noticing a change on the face of the other, the bright interested look faded.

"Of course I leave all that side of the work to W. J. Everything that has to do with hiring the men and their rents is his department. It's out of the question for me to have such details upon my mind."

"Surely, surely. Dr. Peterson knows that too; but Mrs. Graydon spoke to Mr. Clarkson about

McCann's house last fall, and it seems nothing was done. Dr. Peterson thinks if the drainage——”

Dr. Sutherland hesitated. He was one of those who would more willingly go without a meal to give to the needy than ask another to give. His sensitive soul shrank as though he were begging for himself. Graham Douglas broke into a laugh that was not very mirthful.

“Dr. Peterson's mistaken his calling. He should have been manager of the mills instead of your humble servant. The last time he got after me about the Flats he was sure there was going to be a fire; now it's a flood. He seems to think I control the elements. But it's all right, Doctor,” he added hastily, seeing the look of disappointment on his pastor's face. “I'll speak to W. J. right away and see what can be done. It's our very heaviest season and he may not be able to give any time to the houses just now, but——”

“I'm sure it will be all right, Graham. I'm sorry to give you any additional trouble, but Dr. Peterson would not speak without knowledge, and he seems to think the unsanitary condition of the Flats is the cause of the epidemic. Your father's first consideration was the well-being of the men who worked for him, Graham.”

“I know that, Doctor; but you must remember that he had only a dozen or so, and they were nearly all his personal friends. Times have changed. But

I'll see W. J. right away. How did the debate go at the Canadian Club? I was so sorry I had to go to Toronto."

They chatted away for a few minutes about town affairs. When the minister left, the younger man accompanied him to the door deferentially. He watched him go down the street with something like wistfulness in his eyes; eyes that were growing shrewd and hard in the bleak atmosphere of successful money-getting.

As Douglas turned back to his desk a door opened and a worried-looking man in spectacles and a grey business suit that hung loosely on his tall gaunt frame, came hurriedly out. His chief stopped him.

"Dr. Sutherland has just been in, W. J., and it appears that old Peterson is out after your scalp again. He says you've been allowing unsanitary conditions down in Sawdust Alley. Ma Graydon's out with her hatchet, too, so you'd better cut for tall timber."

William Jordan Clarkson gave a sharp exclamation of irritation.

"What's the matter with old Fatty now? I spent thousands on those places last year when he kicked up a row. He gets after me every time any of those McCann brats get a pain. I can't go down there and be nursemaid to all Slab Town, can I?"

Graham Douglas laughed, quite mirthfully this

time. He had been annoyed himself and was relieved to pass on some of the irritation.

"Well, don't let it get under your skin. Dr. Sutherland was sent, I know, but I wouldn't like the old gentleman to think we weren't doing the square thing. What did Harry think of the report from the Georgian Bay Company?"

They went back into the office, once more immersed in business, and the workmen's little houses down on the wet Flats were forgotten.

Dr. Sutherland went on to the post-office, dodging the farmers' buggies as he crossed Main Street. He had unbounded faith in humanity, and especially in that part of it that made up his own flock. He thought they were all as generous and unselfish as he was himself. He was rather disappointed that Graham showed so little enthusiasm over the condition of his working men's houses. He had intended to go into the matter thoroughly with him and show him what a place of beauty and comfort might be made out of that ugly little street down by the mills. Well, Graham was a good boy, he told himself, and he would see that something was done. But the sickness and poverty of the Flats lay heavy on the minister's heart.

There were several letters and papers in his little box, but he had been delayed so long that there was no time to go home and read them; he must go down to the river side and see if any of his families had

caught the diphtheria. But there was one letter that could not wait, because it bore the irregular handwriting of Mary II. Mary's letters were never allowed to lie unopened in her uncle's pocket. He found a quiet corner of the post-office and slipped his pen-knife into the envelope. Mary II and he had exchanged letters every fortnight regularly, ever since her mother, his only sister, had laid down her pen and all the other kindly instruments of her beautiful life of service. It was not Mary II's turn to write and he had a faint feeling of anxiety, and a remembrance of the old proverb that misfortunes never come singly.

He smiled as he opened the letter and found its usual gay style. It was impossible to think of the joyous, red-headed, light-hearted Mary II as the bearer of evil tidings.

Mayfair Valley, Ont.,

April 15th, 19—

Dear Uncle John,

You will surely be alarmed at the sight of this second letter, galloping up right on the tail of my last one, but be thankful I didn't telegraph. I nearly did, I'm in such a hurry to tell you the wonderful news. Aunt Effie is really and truly going to Vancouver. Yes, I know it doesn't look true, written out in ordinary ink, but it is really. Uncle Peter sent an ultimatum in the form of a lovely cheque for her ticket and the extravagance of staying has moved her economical Scotch heart. She's been dying to go

for two years, poor dear, and now she's dying at the thought of going. She's quite settled in her mind that Helen and Pete and I will buy a through ticket for the City of Destruction the moment she is out of sight. Bless her good kind heart, she can't realise that we're not all the same age we were when she took us under her blessed wing ten years ago.

She says she would be willing to stay a year, as Uncle Peter wants, if we would stay right here in the old home. I could give up my music pupils and keep house, and Dr. and Mrs. Boyd would chaperone us to all the social functions we attend in such distracting numbers in this rushing city of 300 inhabitants. But there are several reasons why that plan cannot be worked. First, Dr. Boyd would like to rent the whole house as well as the office, and that would bring in a nice little revenue. Then Peter is another big reason. He will be sixteen next September, and Mr. Foster says he is sure to pass this summer and if he does he will be as far on as our school can take him and will have to leave home to go to High School somewhere. And the third and fourth reasons are Helen and Mary, especially Mary. She, poor soul, is simply dying to get away from Mayfair Valley and have an adventure, or something. She hasn't had one since that day, fifteen years ago, when, at the age of five, she took up housekeeping in Grandfather Sutherland's hay mow and set fire to the barn. Remember?

So, with all these weighty reasons to back us up, Helen and I broke the news to Aunt Effie that we'd like to go and take rooms in some large place, preferably Toronto. Helen could get on the teaching

staff, Peter could go to Collegiate, Mary could get some new music pupils and between scales and exercises she could sandwich in something like an occasional meal for the family.

Well, there it was, a perfect plan, but with one hitch—Aunt Effie; and she positively refuses to get herself unhitched. We've argued and pleaded for a week and the only result has been that Aunt Effie has been driven to quoting something about those who pitched their tents toward Sodom. Finally, when she had to face the problem of leaving Helen and me here, and letting Pete go off to some wicked pitfall of a town all alone, and was making up her mind to telegraph Uncle Peter a final refusal, we made the appeal to Cæsar. "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go, then," quoted Aunt Effie, so here I am, Oh, Emperor, and I've been as circumlocutory as your funny old Mrs. McTavish in arriving. So you see, dear Uncle John, it all rests with you. *Please* let us go. We are all fairly aching to be off to some place bigger than Mayfair. It was all right here when we were little and at school, but Helen says sometimes she can scarcely breathe when she thinks she may have to go on teaching Grade III here all her life. I suppose we are all restless and wicked, as poor worried Aunt Effie says, but you must remember that our grandparents changed continents, so how can we be expected to settle down?

So you will write at once, won't you, like a good obedient Uncle John, and tell Aunt Effie that you are sure Toronto or Montreal or Ottawa would be just the place for us; that, in fact, you had this in mind for us for years. If you sanction our plans

Aunt Effie won't be worried any more; for of course you know that if you were to write and command us all to join a circus, Aunt Effie might look a little puzzled, but she would just fold her dear hands in her black silk lap and say, "Well, children, if your Uncle Sutherland says so, it must certainly be the correct thing for young people to do!"

So please, dear Uncle John, write in a great big hurry and

Say Yes to

Your loving

Mary II.

Dr. Sutherland put the letter into his pocket and strode down the street towards the river thinking deeply. His eyes were shining with the splendour of a new idea. "Why not?" he asked himself. The joy of being removed from the terror of paid house-keepers! The wonder of having a family of young people around him, and Mary II's joyous presence always with him! But the children themselves, would they like to live with him? Would they find the bare old manse dull? It was characteristic of the minister of St. Stephen's that he did not ask whether his three young relatives would be any inconvenience to him, but only would he suit them. His visits over, he hurried home and sat down to his desk.

He was so absorbed in the long letter he was writing that Mrs. McTavish had to call him to his supper twice, and his boiled egg was cold

and the tea bitter. But he ate and drank with a relish, though Mrs. McTavish sat silent, the cold antithesis of her usual chattiness. He was possessed with a sort of childish wonder over the thought of having a family of his own. Lines from his favourite poem were running happily through his head. Dr. Sutherland could repeat all of "Saul" from the introduction to David's Harp—"At last thou art come!" to the grand full orchestra of the closing chords—"E'en so; it is so!" And the thought of having his own young relatives helping him sang through his heart in the lines:

"Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-
song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of the world's life!"

CHAPTER III

THE HOME MAKERS

THE silent old manse of St. Stephen's was like the newly-awakened castle of the Sleeping Beauty. Hurrying footsteps sounded through the bare halls, trunks bumped on the stairs, young laughing voices echoed through the high-ceiled rooms. The Minister's three young relatives had arrived the day before and were as busy getting settled as a cherry orchard full of robins in the month of May.

In the farthest off room over the kitchen the dethroned Mrs. McTavish was packing her blighted hopes away with her best bonnet and wrap, and was prophesying dirt and disorder and uncooked food into the recesses of her small tin trunk.

Dr. Sutherland, doubly happy over the double blessing of the departure and arrival, wandered about the house in all the noise and confusion, rubbing his hands and smiling like a child at his first party. He could not settle down to write a sermon, it was so wonderful to see "the children" running about the house. They were all so bright and gay and young and so good to look at. Helen, the eldest, was, in face and form, one of those real aristocrats,

who are scattered so sparingly through the human family, all regardless of class or condition. Perhaps it was because of her patrician looks that she felt a little superior to the rest of the world, and was never quite successful in hiding her conviction. It was a tribute to Mary's strength of character, that although Helen was born to rule she had never been able to impose her will upon her younger sister. Mary II was a bit of a rebel, she had the spirit that questioned authority. It showed in the tilt of her firm little chin, in the sparkle of her grey eyes and in the glow of her lovely copper-coloured hair. She reminded the minister every day of that radiant Mary, her mother, who had been his only sister. Peter was fifteen, and had been tired for two years. He promised to be good looking too, some day, but he was growing fast and was stooped and clumsy with hands and feet two sizes too large for him.

He was engaged this warm morning in staggering slowly upstairs with boxes and bundles and falling reluctantly down again for another weary load. He dropped a very small box of books upon the bare floor of his sister's bedroom and groaned aloud.

"Say, you girls have no idea how that makes a fellow's back ache," he cried aggrievedly.

Mary was flying about, her slim figure swathed in a voluminous green garment borrowed from Mrs. McTavish. Mary always made holiday sport out of work, and liked to dress for the part in something

fantastic. She put her hands against her brother's broad back and ran him around the room.

"Hurry up," she cried heartlessly, "Aunt Effie's only going to stay away a year; she'll be back before you get unpacked."

"I wish we were going to stay here altogether," declared Helen, dusting the books carefully and placing them on her little shelf. "Mary, just imagine how you'd feel if any of Uncle's people should see you in that rag. You mustn't run around here the way you did in Mayfair. It's going to be a wonderful thing for us to be here. We'll meet the very best people in Wawashene. Peter, be careful, that's my Tennyson.

Peter had sunk upon a roll of carpet, and his spirit was sailing away with Sir Richard Grenville on the gallant "Révenge," while his weary body rested.

Mary laughed aloud. "It's going to be a wonderful thing for the Best People to meet us, I'm sure, especially Pete, now that he's going to be part of a minister's family.

Peter looked up in alarm. "Say, that's the part that's going to be an awful drag on me. I'll be like that Dickens kid. I'll just have to wallow in Sunday schools."

Helen tried not to smile with but indifferent success. "You'll be expected to be an example to all the boys of the congregation," she warned.

“Yes, indeed,” declared Mary, holding out the wide folds of her gown like a pair of wings and sailing about the room, “fond mothers will point to the manse pew on Sundays and whisper, ‘My child, gaze on that handsome and exemplary youth and pattern your life after his.’ ”

Peter grinned up at her. “You’re a great example,” he cried, as Mary wrapped the folds of her gown about her, “you look for all the world like a green snake in that thing, and a copper-head at that, too.”

“I do wish we could afford to keep a maid,” said Helen who never paid any attention to the nonsense of the other two. “I don’t mind the work, it will seem like a rest after teaching school, but I’d like a maid just to attend the door, and the table, and especially on our day **At Home**. We will have an **At Home** day once a week, you know, Mary.”

Mary drew her bright head out of the trunk she was unpacking. She was shy in the presence of strangers and always took fright at the thought of any public appearance.

“Helen Erskine,” she declared, “I know I’m going to love living here, and I’d far rather keep house than teach music. I know Nature intended me to be a hewer of bread and a boiler of water, and I’ll just love to do Church work and help Uncle John; but I will not sit up on a chair in the parlour and do

tea-ing and At-Homing stunts. I'm going to go down to the lake every afternoon and learn to paddle a canoe."

"You must do everything that will help Uncle Sutherland," argued her sister, anxiously. "We have a position to maintain now, Mary."

Peter had by this time arranged the roll of carpet as a pillow and was stretched at full length upon the floor with his book. Though he continued to read he missed nothing of the conversation. The only part of his body that liked exercise was his tongue, and he could talk and read at the same time without the slightest inconvenience.

"Well, sirs, the position I've got just now suits me all right, if I could only maintain it; but I know you two won't leave me in it more'n half a minute."

Mary wandered over to the open window flapping her green wings. "It's a position in society she means. The question before the house is a solemn one, Pete. You'd better sit up and face it like a man. What should a poor creature do who finds herself or himself possessed of a position?"

"I dunno," said Peter still reading steadily. "Poultice it, I guess, if it hurts too much," he added, having feeling memories of a boil from which he had recently suffered.

"It's absurd to act so foolishly about a really serious subject," declared Helen loftily. "I'm going to have one afternoon At Home every week, and serve

tea, and if you don't join, Mary, it will just look as if Aunt Effie hadn't trained us properly, and people will think we don't know anything."

But Mary was leaning half-way out of the window and was not listening. It was July and the gardens along the street were wreathed in roses, still wet with the morning dew. She could see away down the cool shady ribbon of Elm Street to the jewelled expanse of the little lake sparkling in the sunshine. There was a sound of gay voices from across the street, a pair of big iron gates were thrown open and a car came whirling out, filled with young folk in bright summer attire. Helen never admitted anything so vulgar as envy of the wealthy, but as she came to look over Mary's shoulder she uttered a longing sigh.

"Oh, look! They're going up to the Country Club to play golf. Oh, Mary, maybe they'll invite us some day!"

The car went storming up the hill that led out to the country; a couple of girls in the back seat turned and waved their clubs towards the church. Dr. Sutherland was coming across the lawn from the vestry where he had spent the last half-hour trying to bring Mr. McWhirter to view the Garden Party the ladies were planning through less sulphurous gloom. He took off his straw hat and waved it in response to the gay greeting.

Mary smiled tenderly. "Everybody loves Uncle

John. I think it'll be just lovely to be able to help him—a little—in his work."

She hesitated, shyly. Mary Erskine might have a rebellious spirit, one not given to following the beaten path, but she had a soul that was ever in submission to all that was beautiful and good. To her St. Stephen's Church and its minister had always stood for everything that her aspiring young heart worshipped. It had sent out two foreign missionaries whose names had always made fragrance in her home. Alice Grey had died in the Boxer rebellion, and Duncan Sinclair still upheld the banner of the Cross on the heat-baked plains of India. Mary's heart, eager for service, was filled with joy at the thought of being co-workers with them. She humbly hoped that her uncle could find something for her to do among all the clever and consecrated folk that made up this congregation. But she was too reticent about the deeper things of life to speak of this hope, even to Helen.

"I wish you and Peter could remember to call him Uncle Sutherland——"

Helen paused at the sound of the front door bell. "I wonder if Mrs. McTavish will go," she added anxiously.

Mary gathered up her floating draperies and swept towards the door. Her passion for service had found a happy outlet in a hundred little attentions to her uncle. He had already found it very de-

lightful to have someone run after him with his cane, or warn him not to forget his rubbers. Moreover Mary had already divined that, for some inexplicable reason, he was afraid of Mrs. McTavish, and was always ready with her protection.

"It's Uncle John," she declared, "I saw him coming across the lawn. And I left the door locked!" She darted downstairs, her green wrapper billowing out behind her, danced across the bare hall and flung wide the door. As she did so she held out her ample garment on each side and swept an extravagant curtsy, her bronze head nearly touching the floor. "Sir, your humble servant!" she cried, staggering to the perpendicular. And then she stood perfectly still, staring in horror into the startled eyes of a well-dressed, and entirely strange young man!

Helen had many times bewailed the fact that Mary had no poise; she had never been known to carry herself through an embarrassing situation with any approach to dignity. Needless to say she failed to rise to this devastating occasion. For one moment she had a vivid picture of herself in Mrs. McTavish's cast-off gown, of her tousled hair, of the smudge which Peter's big hand had wiped across her face, and she went into a panic. One wild look over the awful stranger's shoulder showed her uncle stooping over the little gate as he entered the garden. "If you want Dr. Sutherland, there he is!" she gasped and slammed the door in his face.

CHAPTER IV

ST. STEPHEN'S

BEFORE the Erskine girls had been a week in their new home the old manse had been transformed. They had brought many of their personal possessions, bright cushions and curtains, a few pictures and books and armfuls of photographs. The dreary old drawing-room, with its funereal black hair-cloth furniture, its grey-green marble mantel, looking like a mossy tomb-stone, its stiff curtains and its shuttered windows was turned into a place of joy and light, with Helen's rose-coloured cushions on the sofa, Peter curled up in the sunny window with a book, and Mary at the old piano playing "Hark, Hark, the Lark!"

Each of the three had already learned a great deal about their surroundings. Mary had discovered that her Uncle's book shelves held much more than theological works, and that underneath the burdocks and lamb's quarter of the old garden were struggling sweet-william and hollyhocks and mignonette. Helen had learned the names and places of residence of all the "best people" of the town. She knew that the big family of girls who lived in

the castle-like red brick house opposite with the ornamental iron gates was called Clarkson, that there were several families of that name in Wawashene and that they constituted a sort of Royal Family in its social realm. Peter had explored every inch of the town from the High School at the north end to "Sawdust Alley" away down on the river bank beside the mills. He had become bosom friends with a half-dozen youths of his own age; he had located all the best places for swimming and fishing and had learned that no boy in Wawashene reached the age of sixteen without winning his spurs, as did the Knights of old. The ceremony in this case consisted in taking a canoe and a tent and some canned pork-and-beans and paddling or portaging his way up the Wawa river to the little lake at its head, and descending via the rapids; and Peter, who had never been in a canoe in his life, was determined to start on this quest before the summer holidays were ended.

Mrs. McTavish had departed, having reached several degrees above freezing point, thawed by the "young leddies' " genial treatment, and promising to write when she reached Jamie and her prairie home.

A few people had called already; the Clarkson girls across the street, who were distinguished from the other families of that name as the "Costly Clarksons," ran over in twos and threes much to Peter's discomfort and Helen's entire satisfaction. Mrs.

HARDING, who was a generous creature, and gave out more than gossip from her tower, sent down her hired girl with an armful of roses and a chicken salad, and several other kindly neighbours dropped in to make the young strangers welcome.

Poor Mary lived in daily fear of again meeting the strange young man whose untimely call had been her undoing. She had but one comfort: no one in the family, except Peter, knew her dreadful secret. She had found confession to someone a necessity and Peter was a sympathetic soul. To add to Mary's dismay she learned that her caller had been a gentleman by the name of Graham Douglas, a very rich and important person in St. Stephen's and quite the most important in the town, not excepting the Mayor. She was still carrying the burden of her secret when their first Sunday arrived and they prepared to meet St. Stephen's assembled.

Helen was feverishly anxious that they appear well. She had more than a suspicion that their clothes would look old-fashioned. In their native village the Erskines were important people and whatever the girls wore was the fashion. Their father had been the village doctor. Helen taught in the public school and Mary gave music lessons. And Mrs. Ross, their father's sister, had often assured them that there were very few people in Mayfair who were their social equals. But Helen was wise enough to realise that they would be on a different

footing in this large and fashionable town where people played tennis in the morning and cards in the afternoon.

"So much depends upon first impressions," she remarked, little thinking how her words made Mary's heart sink, recalling the vivid first impression she had made upon Wawashene's most eligible bachelor.

Helen was looking very handsome and stately this morning in her new grey silk as she came downstairs and found Peter and Mary waiting for her in the hall below. They were both looking subdued and unhappy, and Peter was wondering audibly why a fellow had to be hounded to church on such a hot Sunday. Their sister paid no attention to their mental state, but examined critically their outward appearance. Mary always looked drooping and apologetic among strangers, but to-day she seemed to her sister's nervous eye positively cringing. The toes of Peter's boots were shiny but, like Achilles, he was vulnerable in the heel where his blacking brush had failed to reach. Helen sent him lumbering to the kitchen for another rub, and having straightened Mary's hat and re-tied her sash she announced that they must go.

The study door opened and the minister came out, holding his flowing gown about him. There was a look of radiance on his face, the expression of one who had just been given a glimpse over the boundary

wall of things temporal into the splendid spaces of the Eternal.

"You will sit in the manse pew, children," he said, smiling at them absently. "McWhirter will show you to it. It will be good to see the old seat filled at last."

Mary watched him go down the steps of the side veranda, and along the little path that led to the vestry. Her eyes were very tender.

"Uncle John looks as if he had been visiting in Heaven and had forgotten to bring his soul back with him," she said.

"I wish you and Peter would remember to call him Uncle Sutherland," was Helen's only reply. "It sounds so much more dignified."

They found the streets thronged with church-goers. The Methodist Church was but a block removed from St. Stephen's, the Baptist Church was farther down the hill near the lake, and the Catholic Church was farther up on the highest hill in the town. The Sabbath song of church bells rang through the leafy aisles of the streets and from away down on a corner of Main Street came the softened notes of an old hymn; the Salvation Army band playing "There is a Happy Land" in the sunshine.

It was a well-dressed procession that turned in at the wide cement walk leading to St. Stephen's. Flower-decked hats blossomed along the way; necklaces and ear-rings flashed in the sunlight, silk stock-

ings and high heels tripped lightly up the steps of the sanctuary. There were even several men's silk hats sailing high on the bosom of the stream. Churchgoing Wawashene had but recently reached their altitude; such finery having heretofore been kept exclusively for weddings and funerals. But the summer before an English Prince had visited Wawashene on a Canadian tour, and had left a trail of castor hats behind him as he passed.

Andy McWhirter, an imposing figure in his Sabbath blacks and a white waistcoat, met the three strangers at the door. Helen was about to greet him with a pleasant "Good morning," but the words were checked by a stern silencing gesture. Mr. McWhirter never spoke in the church vestibule on a Sabbath morning. If he found it necessary to communicate with anyone he did so by graphic signals. He beckoned silently to the three and led them on squeaking tip-toe across the entry to the door. The ceremony was performed with such an air of dread solemnity that Peter, who was trampling upon Mary's heels, whispered hoarsely "Where's the corpse?" just as the janitor strode ahead of them down the aisle.

St. Stephen's Church was in a state of transition. It was in process of passing from the reluctant hands of the older folk to the younger generation. The plain brick of the outer walls was of the past, the interior decorations belonged entirely to the new

day. Everything within the church was bright and comfortable. The stained glass windows rather enhanced than subdued the light, and beams of purple and gold and crimson streamed across the aisles and splashed upon the walls. The pews were cushioned and the floor was carpeted in crimson, the pipes of the big organ were highly ornamented in red and gold, and the walls were covered with elaborate designs in gay colours.

To the great discomfiture of Mary and Peter, McWhirter's solemn march led them away up near the pulpit. Peter's brow was covered with perspiration long before it was finished, and when at last they reached the manse pew he fell into it, almost sitting upon Mary in his haste to take cover. He was further embarrassed to see the Costly Clarksons filing into the pew ahead, and to his utter dismay, the youngest, a silken clad, golden-curled, young charmer of thirteen turned and smiled at him as she passed.

Helen was quite composed. She was rather pleased that the manse pew was in a prominent position and was doubly happy to be next door to such important people as the Clarksons.

Now that Mary had reached the haven of the pew she, too, was at ease. Indeed, she had almost forgotten Graham Douglas and all the other people and was beginning to feel happy. For she was in St. Stephen's! This was Uncle John's wonderful

church, where so many godly people worshipped, where Alice Grey had grown up, and from which Duncan Sinclair had been sent forth. Remembering them, Mary had a feeling that she ought to remove the shoes from her feet.

The choir in their black gowns filed in, the minister came up into the pulpit, the far-seeing look of his eye grown brighter, the organ left off the gay dance it had been playing and burst into triumphant chords, the congregation arose and sang:

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,
Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee!”

Even the most selfish heart felt the uplift of the song. The soul of St. Stephen's congregation might not be as great as Mary believed, but it was not sordid, the Sabbath services saved it.

Dr. Sutherland's sermon was as usual thought-provoking and heart-stirring. The sight of the old manse pew filled for the first time with those who were his own was very heartening. Though he had been the minister of St. Stephen's for nearly thirty years he was a comparatively lonely man. Most of the old folk who had welcomed him and his young wife had been laid away, with her, in the green corner behind the church. The new generation was different and strange. But this morning he felt a sense of comradeship with them, and there was a new note in his voice which those who knew and

loved him best noticed. It was one of his best sermons, many said, and Mary was quite sure there was never a better one preached.

She was too much absorbed in it to notice that it did not arrest all the congregation. Many of the men nodded drowsily. Peter got a great deal of entertainment from the poking and whispering in the pew ahead. The choir was another diversion. The leading soprano seemed to be suffering from exhaustion. She leaned heavily against the console of the organ, her drooping head supported by a many-ringed hand; a stout lady in the altos fought a losing battle with sleep all through the sermon; while the leading bass did not fight at all but capitulated as soon as the text was announced, and disappeared behind a barricade of altos. The rest of the choir lolled about in comfortable positions except a handsome tenor and the young lady who played the organ; they were too busy for either rest or sleep and spent the time whispering, writing notes or scurrying through sheets of music.

They all woke up briskly when the sermon was ended, and being thoroughly aroused by a closing hymn the congregation went streaming down the aisles.

The Erskine girls had expected a cordial reception and felt just a little chilled and disappointed when only a half-dozen people nodded to them. The older generation of St. Stephen's had never been in the

habit of speaking even to each other inside the church and they had never encouraged the irreverent habit in strangers. Their children had no such pious reason for restraining themselves but they had as yet no feeling of proprietorship in their church, and took no responsibility for the welcoming of newcomers. So, though they were all kindly and cordial folk, a stranger might worship within their gates and believe them to be a devout congregation of Trappist monks for all the communication they held with him.

The Clarkson girls nodded as they fluttered past, a few others smiled in a distant fashion. Old Mr. McArthur, an elder with a long patriarchial beard, shook hands with them solemnly but looked over their heads and said nothing.

They crossed the lawn alone and entered the garden gate. Mary was feeling very much relieved and Helen very much hurt that no one had noticed them, when there was a swish of silks and a flutter of ribbons and a group of young girls ran across the lawn towards them.

CHAPTER V

THE BELLS

PETER fled in terror before the gay little army charging across the lawn. Mary would willingly have followed him, but Helen held her as she turned to them smiling. They were headed by the eldest of the Costly Clarksons, a tall, handsome young woman with flashing black eyes and a Roman nose.

"Here's a crowd dying to be introduced!" she cried. "So turn round here, you two, and get ready for the ceremony." She waved her hand to her companions. "Here they are, girls. This handsome one is Helen, and this little Red Head is called Mary II, and the kid that ran away at the sight of us is called Peter. I've no doubt he's under the bed by this time. Now, it's our turn. This is Bertha Evans, she's a highbrow; she's frightfully good, so it will be all right for the Minister's family to chum with her. And this is Dorothy Peterson, and Muriel McArthur and Jean Howard. And the rest are all Clarksons, I'm sorry to say." She rattled off their names, pushing forward the owner of each with a humorous description that set everyone laughing.

"And here's the last one, I'm thankful to announce. This is Gertrude Graydon. Bertha Evans is President of the Young Woman's Mission Band, and she's the leader of nearly everything else that's of any use in St. Stephen's; but Gertrude and I are heathen, and we're joint presidents of the Backsliders so you can join whichever you like."

"What a ridiculous creature you are, Katherine Clarkson," said Miss Graydon who was a very exquisite young person in rose silk. "There is a faint hint of truth in something she has said, girls," she added, turning to Helen and Mary. "I am head of the Young Ladies' Club, and I do wish you would join us. We are working to raise money for a set of chimes for St. Stephen's, and we all want you so much to join us."

"That's right, catch 'em young," commented the lively Miss Clarkson. "It's a great wonder that Aunt Margaret wasn't after them the night they came, for her crowd."

"We've been working so for those tiresome bells," said another girl, "that they'll be used to toll at our funerals if Gertrude drives us any harder."

"We're going to get up a big concert or something as soon as the summer is over," said the rose silk Miss Graydon. "We intended to have a Garden Party but the women's organisation got ahead of us, mean things!"

Bertha Evans had been standing by, saying nothing.

Mary decided that she liked her the best of the group. She was tall and refined-looking with a pair of beautiful brown eyes that seemed to gaze kindly upon everything. Mary was glad that she lingered a few minutes after the chatterers moved away.

"We're so glad you've come, we need you," she said. "I'm president of the Alice Grey Mission Circle and I do hope you will join."

President of the Alice Grey Mission Circle! Mary gazed at her in deepest admiration. Of course they would join, she declared, and before they parted she had promised to meet Bertha Evans at Sunday School that afternoon.

The three talked it all over after dinner when their Unele was shut up in his study again and they all washed the dishes in the kitchen.

Helen was very happy. "The Clarkson girls seem so friendly," she said, with the greatest satisfaction. "They are the leading people in the town, Mary," she added, seeing that her sister did not seem sufficiently impressed. "Katherine Clarkson's father is a partner of that rich Mr. Douglas who called to see Uncle the other day."

Mary fled into the pantry with a pile of plates, to escape Peter's wicked grin. "I liked Bertha Evans the best of them all," she said hurriedly, in a desperate attempt to steer clear of Mr. Douglas.

Peter came gallantly to her aid. He wasn't much stuck on that Miss Clarkson. Her nose was too big and she looked like the American flag, or something in that striped dress. He liked that stunning Miss Graydon the best, he declared, shamelessly confessing that he had listened to the conversation from behind the veranda vines. Yes, that Miss Graydon was a corker, and he thought he would like to join the Backsliders himself if she was the President.

The young people met with a much warmer reception at Sunday school than at the Church service. Dr. Peterson, their Uncle's dearest friend, was at the door chatting with his class of boys. He came hurrying down the steps, light of foot and heavy of frame, to welcome them. There was a great deal of noise, and scraping of chairs, and running to and fro in the big bare school room. The Superintendent was a nervous young man, who was making the most of the disorder himself, rushing about hunting for hymn-books, pencils, chalk and the pianist, which had all apparently been mislaid.

"Perhaps you'd better offer to play, Mary," whispered Helen as they seated themselves in a corner.

But Mary refused firmly. Helen did not know what she was asking. Who knew but that awful Graham Douglas might be sitting right beside the piano?

The pianist was found at last, also the hymn-

books, and the Superintendent gave out "Dare to be a Daniel."

When the opening exercises were at last finished, and the children had scampered to their classes, Bertha Evans came up to Mary and Helen.

"Mrs. Graydon wants you and your sister to come to her Young Ladies' Bible Class," she whispered. "It's the Alice Grey class,"

They followed her into a small room at the rear of the building. An elderly woman with white waving hair and a lovely sweet face met and warmly welcomed them.

"I have taught this class ever since Alice Grey was in it," she said with gentle pride. "We call it the Alice Grey Memorial Class now, and there is her picture."

Mary was thrilled. She was sitting in Alice Grey's class, perhaps in her very seat with her pictured eyes looking down upon her. It was better even than she had hoped.

But before the lesson was finished Mary found that she needed all her enthusiasm to carry her through the hour. There were only a dozen young ladies in the class. They were nearly all older than Mary and Helen, earnest young women past the first eagerness of youth, and apparently accepting the dulness of the class without question. Mrs. Graydon had an angelic countenance and a soft, sweet voice, but she was not young, and never had been.

The lesson she taught was as far removed from Mary's active life as if she were an inhabitant of another planet.

But, indeed, Mrs. Graydon did not teach; she talked, talked fluently and continuously, her melodious voice rippling on and on like a gentle stream. Mary felt her body and mind growing numb, and only the fear of Helen kept her from falling asleep.

The members of the class gathered around the newcomers when it was at last over, and all expressed their welcome in kind words, Mrs. Graydon the kindest of all.

"We are so glad to have new members," she said sweetly. "I have taught this class for over twenty years, and I have felt for a long time that I ought to hand over the task to someone younger and more competent, but I have never yet been able to get anyone to undertake it."

"I wish we had been put into Uncle John's class," sighed Mary, as they seated themselves once more under the shady vines of the side veranda. Helen was not so disappointed. She had not been expecting so much, and felt that Sunday school was not supposed to be very interesting anyway.

"But Mrs. Graydon is lovely," she answered. "She's so ladylike and has such a lovely voice. But I wonder where all those girls were whom we met this morning."

"I wonder why her daughter Gertrude wasn't

there," she added, "that lovely girl in the rose silk."

Mary felt that she knew why, but did not give her reasons. Peter came slowly up the path from the side gate. He had been taking a lingering farewell of a half-dozen boys with whom he was already on terms of intimate friendship. He sank upon the veranda steps with a sigh of relief after the exertion of movement.

"Say, I've got the dandiest teacher," he cried, "Dr. Peterson. He's the greatest old guy you ever saw. He's got a book there with views of the Holy Land, all in colours; and, say, the stories he told!"

Peter was so enthusiastic that Mary brightened. Perhaps there were other teachers here like Doctor Peterson.

"He's a great head," Peter continued. "I like him better than that fellow that's Superintendent. He asked me if you were my sister, Nell. He was watchin' you all the time. I know, 'cause I kept my eye on him."

Helen tried to look annoyed, but with little success. A pretty flush rose up over her beautiful face. Mr. Austin, the Superintendent, was a rather good looking young man, and quite prepossessing. She wondered what he did. It would be very agreeable indeed if he should happen to be a bank clerk.

Their Uncle was coming along the path from the vestry and Mary ran indoors to bring out the tea tray. They laid it on the little table on the side

veranda, an indulgence never permitted in Mrs. McTavish's day. Helen brought out some of the old blue china that had miraculously escaped the hands of the successive housekeepers, and Mary set a bowl of glowing nasturtiums in the centre of the snowy cloth.

Dr. Sutherland leaned back in his old veranda chair and sipped his tea in great content. He questioned them regarding their first impressions of Sunday school. Peter was enthusiastic, Helen was politely guarded, and Mary was silent.

"I'm glad you got into Dr. Peterson's class," he said. "He's the busiest man in the town, yet he always finds time for his boys. He's one of the Old Guard of St. Stephen's, and one who has never lost his youth."

He was silent for a few moments looking at Mary, and she felt that he expected her to say something.

"We met such a lovely crowd of girls to-day, Uncle John," she ventured. "And they were telling us about the bells they are going to get for St. Stephen's."

"Yes, I'm afraid they are," he said, with a whimsical smile.

"Afraid?" asked Mary.

"Just a little afraid that we may become selfish and think more of the bells of St. Stephen's than the sounding out of the Gospel to the people around us. But I'd like chimes," he added hastily. "And

the young people are working hard. But I sometimes wish I could see them taking up the tasks that the older ones are laying down. Mrs. Graydon is a saintly woman but she is getting too old to teach and cannot find a successor, and Dr. Peterson and Mr. McArthur will have to be giving up soon, but I don't seem to be able to get the new colts into harness." He smiled suddenly. "Ah, well, well," he added, "the three assistants I have just engaged are going to usher in a new era in St. Stephen's."

He reached for a second piece of Mary's cake and looked around the little table with beaming eyes.

"Children," he cried, "do you realise that this is the first Sunday I have spent at *home* in twenty-five years?"

He looked at Mary II and found her big grey eyes fixed lovingly upon him, shining with tears, and he suddenly felt like a man who had fallen heir to a great fortune.

CHAPTER VI

“LEETLE LAC GRENIER”

GRAHAM DOUGLAS would have been both blind and deaf had he not been aware of the fact that he was the shining matrimonial goal towards which all the young ladies of Wawashene were steered. The fact was that he was much more keenly alive to the pretty campaign that raged around him than any of the campaigners dreamed. And though he would not have confessed it, for all his wheat and lumber business, he found a great deal of shame-faced pleasure in it.

So, when he discovered that there was one young lady in the town who was carefully avoiding him, his curiosity and interest were aroused.

He discovered to his amusement that he could not elicit anything more friendly from Mary Erskine than a cold formal bow; a marked contrast to the effusiveness of the first one she had deigned him. He did not like the idea of a young and charming lady disliking him, and determined that she should soon change her opinion.

So, one hot afternoon, having seen Mary and her Uncle pass his office on their way from the post-

office, and thinking that she looked very sweet and pretty in her girlish white "middy," he waited until they had time to reach home, then picked up the telephone and called the manse.

They had just entered the house and Mary was arranging a spray of larkspur with some fragrant "old man" in a vase on the study desk. She paused, alarmed at her uncle's side of the conversation.

"Thank you, Graham," he was saying. "Yes, yes, I'm sure we can all go. The girls will enjoy it. A spin on the lake in that launch of yours will blow some of the rubbish out of my next Sunday's sermon. What time?"

Mary slipped from the room and flew to the kitchen on noiseless feet, snatching her hat from the hall rack as she passed. Fortunately Helen was upstairs, but Peter was in the pantry making amends for what he had considered a rather light dinner. Mary swept down upon him. "Tell Helen I'm going down to Bertha Evans's," she hissed. "She needn't telephone, because we'll be out on the lake. Maybe I won't be home until after tea. Good-bye!"

He stood gaping after her, a large wedge of pie obstructing his speech, and more amazed at Mary's failure to reprove him than at her mad haste.

She slipped out of the side door and fairly flew down the path that led behind the church. She ran till she was beyond call, and then slackened her pace to a decorously brisk walk. It was still early after-

noon but the streets were gay with young people in holiday attire. Wawashene was fast becoming a summer resort. Young men in white ducks and flannels, girls in "middies" and gay skirts, hurried to and fro. Everyone carried a tennis racquet, and seemed always to be rushing from the lake to the ice-cream parlours up town, or rushing from the ice-cream parlours to the lake. It was a strenuous life, this holidaying. Mary felt the joyous bustle of it all. It was quite thrilling to be running away, and to be running under such pleasant circumstances.

The Evans home was an old house in an unfashionable area away out by the lake shore, just where the town and the country met. Bertha's parents were retired farmers who had been driven to the town by hard work and approaching age. Their hearts were still in the open fields so they had settled as near them as possible, and from their door the white dusty road ran out along the lake shore to the green wooded hills.

Helen had early discovered that the Evans family were not included among Wawashene's Best People, and viewed Mary's growing intimacy with them with some anxiety. Bertha, their only child, was the cleverest young woman in the town. She was a graduate of Toronto University and taught in the High School, but her father and mother, though they knew the psalms and much of the gospels by heart, did not know a grammar when they saw one, and

treated the nominative case with placid disrespect. Moreover, Mother Evans wore long full skirts and elastic sided gaiters, and Father Evans's luxuriant growth of beard barely concealed the fact that he refused to wear a necktie even on Sundays when he was compelled to don a white collar. So it was impossible that their daughter should be included in the visiting list of the Costly Clarksons.

Nevertheless Mary had fallen in love with the whole family the moment she had set eyes on them. She ran up the pretty garden path to find Mrs. Evans in her snowy afternoon apron sitting knitting on the veranda, and Mr. Evans in his shirt sleeves and stocking-feet, sound asleep on an old lounge screened by the Virginia creepers.

"Eh, now ain't that too bad!" cried Mrs. Evans, "Bertie's jist gone up to the post-office this min'it! She was jist sayin' she wished you'd come and go for a paddle up the shore. My, ain't it hot! Come away in, Pa's sound asleep, Come an' have a taste of ras'berry vinegar."

But Mary was not to be stayed in her flight. The Evanses had a telephone, and Helen might even now be ringing their number.

"Please tell Bertha that I'm going out to the White Cove for a walk, and tell her to come as soon as she gets home. Maybe I'll steal her canoe if she doesn't hurry," she cried, and was off like the dancing lake breezes.

The boat-house where Bertha's canoe and her father's old fishing boat were kept was reached by a road that ran off the dusty highway parallel with the curving line of the shore. It was an old abandoned railroad track, and was hedged on either side by a jungle of willows and alder-bushes, choked with every sort of swamp bloom from the tall jewel-plant to the yellow water-lily down in the pools. Here and there a great tree overhung the track and made a Corot picture against the sparkling lake.

Mary and her new friend had often wandered down this cool green lane to the little bay beyond a point of cedars called "White Cove." The boat house was just half way between the bay and the town, and Mary ran down the little stony path that led to it. It was an old grey, weather-beaten building, leaning far over on one side, still staggering from the last winter's fight with the ice. Mary undid the fastening of the heavy door and looked into the cool gloom. There lay the old boat in the green water, swaying gently up and down, and there was Bertha's canoe upside down on the platform. It took Mary just a moment to right it and slide it into the water. She picked up an old book of poems they had been reading, a couple of cushions and a paddle, and trembling at her own recklessness she stepped into the canoe and pushed herself out into the sunshine.

She did not dare contemplate going for a paddle

alone, but she felt she might surely creep up along the shore to the little bay where she would meet her friend. It was a lovely fairy nook, a curving bay of hard white sand set round with luxuriant cedars and white stemmed birches. A big bleached rock at one end had given it the name of White Cove, but Mary called it the Ivory Palace. She set off on a bold voyage towards it, bumping against the shore and touching the sand with her paddle whenever she took a deeper stroke. It was not far, but she was out of breath with excitement and triumph when at last she reached the ivory pillared grove and ran the bow of her canoe up on the white sand. She laid her paddle on the white rock, settled herself on the cushions, and gave herself up to perfect joy.

Ever since Mary had come to Wawashene the lake had called to her. She was perfectly happy on its shore, she was ecstatic out on its waves. Here everything was fresh and sweet smelling. The noise of shunting trains, the rumble and scream of the saw mills were turned to soft distant music. White winged gulls floated far up in the blue above, and white winged yachts flew merrily over the sparkling blue beneath. Around her a little ring of green islands shut out the wind, and framed wonderful pictures of the lake beyond.

Mary heaved a loud sigh of content and picked up the little book she had brought. It was a small collection of the later Canadian poets, which she and

Bertha had been reading the last time they visited the Ivory Palace. She lay back against the cushions lost in the delight of Roberts' lines:

"Dear heart, the noisy strife
And bitter carplings cease.
Here is the lap of life,
Here are the lips of peace.

Afar from stir of streets,
The city's dust and din,
What healing silence meets,
And greets us gliding in!"

The canoe rocked gently in time to the lilt of the lines. She read on and on, drifting far away into a dream-world created by the poet and the whispers of the birches, and the sunlight on the waves.

She had come to one of Duncan Campbell Scott's now:——

"Oh ship incoming from the sea
With all your cloudy tower of sail——"

Something made her look up, and there it was!—the very ship; a tall white winged yacht "leaning grandly to the gale," and racing over those very "toppling crests," that went "crashing into silver snows."

And then Mary sat up suddenly with a cry of alarm. It was no poet's dream but a dreadful reality. She looked around her in dismay. Her canoe had drifted out from the shore,—out beyond the sheltering islands, and was still moving steadily

towards the open water where the yacht was racing and where the white capped waves tumbled about!

She gave a call to the flying craft, but it surged past her, unseeing, pennons flying, sails bulging, away out into the open. Mary was afraid of people, but she had both courage and presence of mind in the face of real danger. After the first feeling of panic she sat perfectly still and set her mind to the problem of getting out of her predicament. She was not far beyond one of the islands. She could see the cottages along the shore, and hear the shouts of the children in the water. She might call to them or she might wait until she was picked up by a passing launch. Graham Douglas, even, might come sailing along at any moment and rescue her. In her present plight Mary was willing to confess that even he would be a welcome sight. That steady drift outward was rather terrifying.

And then, just as she was about to call for help, round the point of the nearest island came a long dark canoe and swept straight towards her. Mary gave an exclamation of relief. She found, to her dismay, that she felt like crying. It was a big canoe, loaded down almost to the water's edge with a camping outfit. A tent pole was lashed to the gunwale. The man kneeling in the stern was paddling with the effortless stroke of the expert canoeist, skilfully slipping over and around the big waves that met him as he rounded the island. Mary watched him

anxiously as he swept into the calmer water where her little derelict lay bobbing up and down on the swell. She waved her book and he swerved and came sweeping alongside.

For a moment Mary thought her rescuer was one of the young Indians from the reservation across the lake, his shirt sleeves were rolled up and his arms and his lean face were as brown as any Red Skin. His tall, lean, muscular frame and the straight black hair that hung over his forehead from beneath his slouch hat added to his Indian-like appearance. But as he reached out and caught the trailing rope of Mary's canoe, his dark face lit up with a smile and she saw with surprise that his eyes were as blue as the lake he had just crossed.

"Lost your paddle?" he asked, in a voice and accent that told he was not at all the backwoods-man his appearance might indicate.

Mary shook her head, the ridiculous desire to put her face down on the thwart and cry was still assailing her.

"No, I—the paddle—lost me," she said, making a brave little attempt at a joke. "I didn't know I'd gone on a voyage until I found myself away out here. I was back there behind the islands, in that little bay."

He smiled again, such a radiant smile, with a flash of perfect white teeth, and a gleam of blue eyes that Mary found most agreeable. He seemed to

realise that she was still frightened, for he held her canoe steady with one strong brown hand.

"Ah, that was too bad," he said with a grave solicitude in his kind eyes, "let me take you back. You were over in the White Cove? I'll tow you, if you don't mind. You'll be perfectly safe there, running behind."

He fastened the painter of her canoe to his stern, dipped his paddle and away they spun straight towards the white pillars. Mary was safely back under the shadow of the Ivory Palace, her paddle in her hand, before there was any opportunity to speak again. She stood on the white rock, holding the painter of her truant canoe. "I can never thank you enough," she stammered, her shyness returning, now that all real danger was passed. "You see, I can't swim, and I can't even paddle much, and I was really dreadfully frightened."

He looked up at her standing above him, in her white dress, her bronze hair blown by the breeze, her face flushed and lovely with excitement. "I really can't be very sorry," he said simply, "I'm so glad I had the chance of helping you." His smile was so friendly that Mary tried to think of something else to say that would keep him just a little longer. He did not seem to be in a hurry to go. "I—I don't even know your name," he said, with a shyness that matched her own.

"It's Mary Erskine."

"And mine's Hunter."

"It looks like it," said Mary with a smile, glancing down at the axe and guncases at his feet.

He shook his head and laughed. "No, my business is something much more constructive. I only hunt new trails for steam-engines, and my worst weapon is a transit. I've just come in from a few months in the backwoods."

"It was fortunate for me that you came at this moment," said Mary gratefully.

They were silent, each wondering how to prolong the little meeting. Finally he picked up his paddle. At the same moment Mary dropped her book nervously and he caught it deftly, just as it reached the water. They laughed as he handed it back to her. "I see you have some of Drummond's there," he said, glancing at the open page. "Do you know 'Leetle Lac Grenier'?"

"Oh, don't I?" cried Mary. "'Leetle Lac Grenier,' who calls so loud."

His smile was radiant now. "Haven't you often heard it?"

"I always do. Leetle Lac Grenier is this little grove here and this bay, and its 'voice is as loud as de rapid's roar,' when I am up in the town."

He nodded, as if he understood perfectly. "Mine's farther away, off in the bush. Somewhere beyond the baths of northern stars, I guess."

He waited a moment, then dipped his paddle in the green water again.

"You are sure there is nothing more I can do?" he asked, with a glance towards the town that suggested to Mary that he might like to tow her home.

But Mary's shyness would not let her take advantage of this, much as she would have liked it.

"Nothing more, thank you," she said, though she wished he would stay and tell her more about himself. But she waved good-bye gaily. She felt sure she would see him again, and soon. Life had suddenly taken on a glow and colour in which any wonderful thing might happen. She stood on the white rock and watched until his canoe swept around the island on its way to the town. And when he turned and waved his paddle she answered with hers.

CHAPTER VII

“JOHNNY PETATIE”

IT was Monday morning and the family in the old manse were busy at their various tasks. Dr. Sutherland was shut up in his study writing his weekly budget of letters. Helen was dusting and arranging the parlour with special care; for Miss Gertrude Graydon was to bring her club there for a meeting in the afternoon. Mary was flying about the kitchen making cookies for the same occasion. She was dressed in her trim blue morning gingham. Mrs. McTavish's discarded green “wrapper” still hung in the back room; but Mary had never dared to don cap and bells at her work since the day they had brought her such disaster. Peter was out in the jungle garden making feeble efforts to dig up the weeds and shouting to Mary that there was no use pulling at the burdocks for there was a Chinaman hanging on to the roots of every one.

Mary had no ears for his complaints. They were filled with a steady stream of talk that issued with clouds of steam from the back kitchen where Mrs. McCann, the town's leading washer-woman, was

doing the family laundry and giving out a minute history of all her other customers.

Mary was but half listening to the story of how young Mrs. Jack Clarkson quarrelled with Mrs. W. J. and was jealous of Mrs. Ellwood. Her mind was far away. It was three days since her great adventure and she had not found time to return to the scene of it. And who knew but the Hunter of the Lake might be paddling up and down before the Ivory Palace?

"Leetle Lac Grenier, don't call no more please, till I get this bothersome meeting out of my way," she pleaded.

She immediately reproached herself. She had been longing for some work in St. Stephen's and surely she was not going to complain now that she had found it.

"You oughta see the house that Mrs. Kirkwall keeps, she's Graham Douglas's aunt. But what can you expect with her off playin' cards or goin' to some little dinglam-danglum of a meetin' every day of her life, and leavin' everythin' to them two Robison girls. The Robisons was all trollops anyhow, their mother was a Nash, and everybody knowed what the Nashes . . ."

Mary slipped away into the inner part of the house for a moment's respite.

"I wonder if she'd take less wages and let us do without the talk," she suggested to Helen. "She

beats Mrs. Harding for gossip. I wonder if we oughtn't to try to do without her, Helen. It takes a dreadful amount of money to run a house."

"There, that looks better with the fern against the piano; doesn't it? This room is dreadfully stiff and dingy but it has one good feature, the furniture; and antiques are all the rage now. I know it costs a great deal, Mary; but we can't do the washing and the rough work. Think of our hands."

"Think of poor Uncle John's pocket book."

"I'm sure we don't spend any more than Mrs. McTavish did. Peter, dear! surely you aren't coming in with those dusty boots?"

Peter had tip-toed in from the garden having heard their voices through the open window.

"I won't put my feet on the floor," he promised, stretching himself on the sofa with his feet extended in the air. "I gotta loaf a little now and then or I'll forget how."

Helen was struggling with little success to make the old dingy parlour look up-to-date. But everything was wrong about it. In the first place everyone in Wawashene, who was anyone at all, called the parlour the drawing-room; and no one could lay the smallest claim to having any taste in furnishings who did not own a deep wide couch, called a Chesterfield, set across one corner, a gramophone with Caruso records set across another corner and a large

rose-shaded lamp, like an umbrella on a very long handle standing beside the piano.

As the manse parlour possessed not one of these requirements, Helen had very little hope of making it even passable in the eyes of the Costly Clarksons.

"Oh you should have seen the drawing-room in Mr. Douglas's house, Mary. It was too bad altogether that you missed that lovely sail, especially when he took us home to tea. His aunt is just charming and their drawing-room is furnished in old rose, and there was the most wonderful Chesterfield in grey velvet."

"There was another Chesterfield you missed," said Peter with a twinkle in his eye. "It was in grey tweed. It asked me twice where you had gone to. My, you were in a whale of a hurry to get away!" he added suspiciously.

Mary silenced him with a look. "One word more from you, and out you go to your burdocks," she threatened.

Fortunately Helen was absorbed in regarding the room critically. "Mary, I wonder if we closed those doors would it make it look any cosier?"

The experiment was made with Mary's usual promptness. The high blank doors between the front and back parlours were swung shut, Peter directing operations from his sofa.

"I'm dying to help," he murmured, "but I dassen't

put my feet on the carpet." He looked up at the expansive doors. "My eye, what a waste o'timber!"

"It looks worse than ever," sighed Helen.

"I like it that way," asserted Peter. "It looks kinda jolly, like big barn doors. I feel as if there was a hay mow on the other side and I might hear a hen cackle."

"You have such an agricultural mind," scoffed Mary. "Now they make me think of the gates of a feudal castle. I feel sure there must be an old green moat on the other side and gallant knights riding up to ask for Helen's hand." She struck an heroic attitude.

"Up draw-bridge, grooms! What, warder, ho! Let the portcullis fall!"

"Excellently well recited! Excellently well!" cried a voice from the door.

Mary was standing opposite the door that led into the back hall and there, in the doorway leading to the kitchen, stood a little old man, in blue overalls, a big basket in one hand and a big straw hat in the other. He bowed elaborately and smiled on the three young people.

"Good morning," he cried and in spite of the overalls and the basket there was something very dignified in his manner. "The Miss Erskines I presume? I must apologise for the informal way in which I appeared. But I knocked and no one heard

me. And I have been spoiled by your good Uncle who always lets me walk right in."

"I am sorry there was no one at the door," said Helen politely.

"Ah, but I'm not, indeed. I'd have missed that fine speech from Marmion. Do you know the rest of it?" he asked, placing his basket on the kitchen table and turning to Mary. He stepped out into the middle of the floor and recited with a great wealth of dramatic gestures,——

"Lord Marmion turned—well was his need
And dashed the rowels in his steed——"

right on to where Lord Douglas "slowly seeks his castle halls."

His audience of three burst into applause and the little old man's face flushed with pleasure.

"Tut, tut," he declared apologetically. "I'm a waster of good time indeed. That's what Mr. Graham Douglas tells me. I call him Lord Douglas and I tell him I'm Marmion, always shaking my gauntlet at his towers and pouring shouts of defiance."

"Ah, well, well," he added. "I ought to know Marmion. Many a time I taught it to my pupils, and I forgot that I wasn't in school. Once a dominie always a dominie."

He suddenly became very dignified again.

"Indeed, it's sorry I am that I have not had the opportunity of calling upon you before and welcom-

ing you to Wawashene; but my little farm is more punctilious than I am, and it has sent you a few words of greeting in its own language."

He removed the big rhubarb leaves from the basket and displayed a lovely array of fresh vegetables; tender green peas, delicate golden beans, glowing tomatoes, bunches of shining onions, and bouquets of rosy radishes. And all were arranged so cunningly against green leaves of crisp lettuce, with sprays of parsley to garnish them, that the basket was a real work of art.

Mary gave a little cry of admiration. "Oh, they're too lovely to eat. I'd like to put them on the table for a centrepiece instead of flowers."

The little old man rubbed his hands gleefully. "Indeed, now, I'm often astonished at the way the Father has of making everything beautiful for us. I wonder at Him. He doesn't seem content with giving us lavish supplies of food; He must put them up in such wonderful packages. Did you ever see anything more beautiful than a cabbage? Indeed, you did not. And what can compare to an ear of corn?—golden nuggets wrapped in sea-green silk thread! Yes, I wonder at the Father. 'The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.'"

His pink smiling face and his radiant blue eyes, the pinafore-like overalls, held by straps over his shoulders, all gave him the appearance of a very

clean, very delightful child. And yet there was something very dignified in his manner, and his speech was not that of a man who comes to the back door with vegetables.

Helen noticed this and looked at him hesitatingly. She felt she could not ask such a stately old gentleman to sit down in the kitchen, and wondered if it would be quite correct to invite him to bring his overalls and basket into the parlour.

Peter suddenly settled it for her. "Won't you come into the study and see Uncle John?" he asked cordially.

The visitor held up his hands in alarmed protest. "Oh, no, no, thank you. You don't know what you are asking, my dear young gentleman. When I visit the Doctor I never know when to go home. There's a weakness comes over me, when I get in there with all those books around me, and we begin to argue on pre-millenarianism and I just take root and stay. No, no, my dears, just let me empty this basket for you and tell him they are from my wife with her best compliments."

Mary arranged the lovely things carefully on the table. "Oh, how kind of her and you too! I haven't seen *real* tomatoes since we left home."

He was delighted with her pleasure. "Ah I see you know the kind that God Himself makes, out in the sunshine of the open country. Do you know I do not like that word Nature. It is a poor, barren

meaningless word fit only for a heathen language. It is just no word for us who have the open Scriptures."

He took the basket, while Helen repeated their thanks. "And who shall I tell Uncle John has been so kind to us?" she asked.

"Oh, tell him they came from Johnny Hill. But he'll know anyway. The doctor knows my pease. He rather fancies them."

He bade them each a very stately good-morning, with many bows.

Mary followed him to the door.

"I hope you are feeling quite at home in St. Stephen's," he said, turning in the doorway. "It is a grand old church with great traditions."

"Oh yes, we love it here," she said, wondering if he belonged to the congregation, yet, somehow, feeling that he would not quite fit in.

"Ah, I am glad to hear that. You will be a great help to the Doctor, indeed. He needs some young folk just like yourselves to start another forward movement. There was a great one twenty years ago. It sent out two foreign missionaries and three ministers of the Gospel. And there are greater heights ahead. 'And who knoweth but thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this'," he quoted with a radiant smile.

"Oh, no, no," cried Mary in distress. "Why I'm just here to learn; to be shown the way. Helen and

I don't know anything at all about what a church ought to do. We want to help, though," she added hastily.

The little man was silent for a moment, gently fingering the edge of a rhubarb leaf. He looked up at Mary half-shyly.

"Miss Erskine," he said gently, "you will pardon me for asking you. Perhaps I should not, as this is the first time we have met, but I do not think you will misunderstand." His voice sank to a reverent whisper. "Do you know the Father? It is the golden key to all doors just to know Him. Everything else opens out before us."

Mary was deeply touched. "I think—I hope I am beginning to," she faltered.

"Ah, that's it, that's it," he cried. "You are right, and I was mistaken. We are all just beginning to learn, just in our A.B.C.'s. Well, well, I'm wasting your time, and on Monday morning, too." He paused again on the step, and turned to Mary, his eyes shining so that she stared at him.

"You will never fail, if you keep near the Father," he whispered. "'As for God, His way is perfect, the word of the Lord is tried; He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him'."

"I see you had a visit from Johnny Petatie this morning," said Dr. Sutherland when they were seated at the dinner table. "I saw him passing the study window and hailed him. You know, I can

no more let Johnny Petatie go by without hearing a word from him than I can pass the library when I am going down town."

"Johnny Potato?" asked Peter, laughing.

"Yes, but it's pronounced Petatie by his best friends. That's his name on the Mill Flats. It's a title of nobility, too."

"Oh, Uncle John, who is he? I felt as if I had been talking to one of the old prophets," cried Mary.

"And he can recite Scott beautifully," added Helen.

"He used to be an old school-teacher. Of course he told you that; it's his one weakness. He runs a little farm now, down near the river. He is one of my warmest friends, but he doesn't belong to us. I really don't know what denomination he leans towards, unless it's the Plymouth Brethren."

"I thought by the way he spoke that he wasn't a Presbyterian," said Mary artlessly.

Dr. Sutherland smiled at the unconscious revelation.

"Ah, well, well. I always feel that things can't go very far wrong while old Johnny Petatie is praying for us. He is one of the strong pillars of St. Stephen's, a solid gold pillar, too the kind that has lily-work about its top."

CHAPTER VIII

“SAWDUST ALLEY”

THE meeting for which Helen was preparing so carefully was not to be held until four o'clock, so, as Mary was ready long before that hour, she put on her hat and accompanied her Uncle on his afternoon walk to the post-office. It was very hot, but the Costly Clarksons were marking their tennis court to be ready when the banks closed. Wat Watson called out a humorous greeting as they passed. Wat was even wittier than usual when the minister's pretty niece accompanied him.

They sauntered along under the shade of the Avenue's spreading maples. Woodlawn Avenue, the most imposing street Wawashene boasted, ran straight through the town, cutting it in halves. It started away up on the highest hill where Graham Douglas's mansion stood facing its length. The big red brick house, with its verandas and balconies and bay windows and turrets stood on a splendid elevation, set back within imposing lawns and gardens.

With such a fine start in life, the Avenue as everyone in the town called it, might have been expected

to run between lawns and parks all its length, but its grandeur diminished from the moment it left the stone pillared gates of Graham Douglas's garden. It swept on quite splendidly for several blocks, it is true, between fine rows of stately old elms, and trim boulevards, flanked by pretty homes with lawns and gardens. But after it passed the corner where St. Stephen's raised its tower above the tree tops the glory of the Avenue began to fade.

It slipped rapidly down the hills, the homes on either side growing smaller and less beautiful. It passed through the town's business section where farmers' wagons and motor cars jostled each other at the crossing, down by livery stable and garage, by factory and warehouse, growing crowded and narrow as though shrinking from notice because aware of its lost beauty. It grew rougher and more sordid and ashamed of itself at every block, until it finally crossed the railroad tracks, and here it gave up all pretence of respectability, abandoned itself to dirt and ugliness, and became a veritable Prodigal Son of a street. It even changed its name as many a prodigal has done before it, lest it might disgrace Woodlawn Avenue. Below Main Street and the business section it became merely Wood Street, and down in the noise and dust of the Mills Flats it gave up even claiming relationship to the Avenue and was known as Sawdust Alley.

"Is there anybody in St. Stephen's named Hunter,

Uncle John?" his niece asked suddenly as they reached Dr. Peterson's door.

"Hunter? No, child, I don't know anyone in the town by that name. Let me see. Tuts, yes. There's Hunter and Stewart have a grocery down there by the lake; and there's young Dr. Hunter. He's Dr. Chapman's assistant. But the creature's a Baptist, so don't let me hear of you speaking to him. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, just idle curiosity," laughed Mary in confusion. "I promise not to look at the Baptist," she added hastily. Nevertheless she registered them both carefully in her mind.

They tapped on Dr. Peterson's door, only to find him gone, but right on the post-office steps they encountered Bertha Evans.

"Oh, what luck to meet you here," she cried. "Do come with me to make a sick visit. A meeting?" She made a wry face. "Oh, the bells, of course. I forgot. Never mind, we'll be back before four o'clock."

"I will," cried Mary recklessly, "even if I don't get back before dark. Is it anywhere near the shore?"

Bertha laughed. "Are you planning to steal my canoe again and sail away to your Ivory Palace?"

"Yes, but I'd like to steal you, too, so you could paddle me. I'm not very expert——" She stopped;

Mary had not confessed her Great Adventure to anyone yet.

"I'm sorry, but this is quite a different sort of expedition. We'll go paddling some other day. I'm on my way to Sawdust Alley, away down beside the mills."

Dr. Chapman's old horse came ambling around the corner at that moment, and the doctor pulled up at the sidewalk for a word with Dr. Sutherland. Mary knew from experience that it would last half-an-hour at least, so she gaily slipped her hand into Bertha's arm and away they went.

Their way led steadily down-hill. They left the business section of the town and entered the region of smaller homes; then came stables and warehouses, a huge skating rink, a vacant lot piled with rusted fragments of machinery, a long row of dingy freight sheds; and they had come to the wide band of railway tracks that cut off the town people from the little mill community by the riverside.

The girls stood in the glaring heat and dust while a train shunted and snorted and banged its noisy way up and down across the thoroughfare, finally taking itself off with an insulting whoop. They ran across the tracks and for the first time Mary found herself in Sawdust Alley.

Before her stretched a dingy, muddy street, slinking along between the railway tracks and the river front. There was a single row of houses, all exactly

alike in their bare grey ugliness, except for the Mill Boarding House, a big barn-like building, which had only more ugliness to distinguish it from its ugly neighbours. They all stood huddled together, crammed up close to the narrow board side-walk, their faces turned towards the black desert of cinders and steel rails, and a fence covered with circus and moving picture advertisements. Behind was the river, but there was no blue expanse of water and white sandy shore here. The river was covered with logs, the shore heaped with piles of sawdust and the view was shut out by the great bulk of the mill buildings. The air smelled strongly of oil and hot machinery. The sun beat down blindingly on the bare houses and the glaring tracks, while the roar of the trains on one side, the booming of the flour mills, and the screaming of the saws on the other made conversation difficult.

Bertha stopped before the first house in the row. A line of steel rails running off from the main track had cut off one of the ugly houses from its ugly neighbours. It stood there alone, on a bare triangular island of blackened earth: a desperate little home struggling to keep up its head in a swirling sea of commerce that threatened to submerge it. Nevertheless, the windows had brave little white curtains, and two tiny geraniums bloomed gallantly in two salmon cans on the dusty ledge.

"I'm going in here," Bertha said. "Mrs. Greeves

is rather queer at all times, but exceedingly queer when she's sick. Do you mind walking on to the end of those planks? I won't be ten minutes."

The door of the little house opened suddenly and a big clumsy lad, with the form of a man and the face of a child, came stumbling out, a smile of welcome on his simple face.

"This is my Mr. Dick," whispered Bertha. "Poor Danny, you'll see him often if you come down here."

Mary stepped over the track and continued her pilgrimage of Sawdust Alley. Far up the glaring road the wide, sunny spaces of the country were spread out lavishly: cool forest and flowering field,—miles and miles of them. But here everything was as cramped and crowded as though it were the heart of a great city. There was not room for a tree to give shade from the burning heat, nor a blade of grass to rest the aching sight.

In open doorways, swarming with flies, babies rolled about and women's faces looked out through dirty window-panes. There were children everywhere. They made mud houses in the middle of the black roadway; they sailed bark canoes on the ill-smelling ditch that lay along the plank-walk; they chased each other over the sawdust and the garbage heaps of the back yards.

Mary had lived all her life in the open country until she had come to Wawashene. And she had

seen only the side of the town that lay up on the tree-clad hills beyond Main Street. She had vaguely supposed it was all pretty red brick homes with rose gardens, and long shady streets under drooping elms. It was a shock to find that down here, just at the foot of the hill where St. Stephen's stood, there could be so much dirt and ugliness. She walked on slowly, her eyes growing wide with dismay.

But here at the end of the street was the first sign of better things. The Avenue had followed the course of the Prodigal to the end—apparently, for it came back to its original cleanliness and beauty. The road swept past the flour mill, and up a little hill, along the river bank and once more, it became elm-shaded and flower-fringed. And at a turn where it disappeared from view Mary caught the gleam of a white house set prettily in cool green orchards and the glory of a great garden of flowers!

She felt a faint stirring of comfort and cheer, a relief that there was no more of this sordid ugliness.

At the end of the sorry row of houses a half-dozen little girls had set up housekeeping on the sloping veranda of an old building which was falling to pieces. The same number of boys had dug a hole under the broken steps and were playing highway robbers with the cellar as a den.

A boy of about ten was directing their operations from the street in a loud, hoarse voice. Every motion of his thin body showed that he was yearning

to be with them; but he was chained ignominiously to a baby-carriage. It was a very battered and rickety vehicle, but the baby in it was perfectly content with it and his surroundings. He was a lovely little fellow, with tight black curls fitting his pretty head like a cap. He had dancing black eyes, and a pink-and-white skin that even the coat of coal dust he carried could not quite hide. He churned joyously up and down, shouting his complete agreement with the established order, while his big brother shoved him back and forth with one hand and directed the manœuvres of the robbers with the other.

"Hi, there, Skinny, whatcha doin'? Aw, ye poor simp, that ain't the way. Pull the board out further," he was roaring, "further, I tell ya!"

He was interrupted by a shriek from his charge. A passing urchin, half playful, half mischievous, gave the baby a sharp poke with a lath he was carrying. The baby was a gallant little warrior and hit out at his assailant with a yell of defiance. The big brother whirled about.

"You Jones kid!" he screamed. "I'll larn ya!" He clutched the rickety handles of the carriage and charged on the offender. Down off the side-walk, across the green ditch, over the lumpy road and back, dodging, bumping, leaping and swaying, went the baby-carriage and its prey. Mary stood breathless, watching its perilous progress. Evidently the baby did not share her alarm. His valiant spirit was

aflame with the joy of the chase, his dimpled hands hung on to the sides of his swaying chariot, his eyes blazed with excitement, his shrill little voice rose above his brother's shouts.

The prey had doubled back and was tearing down the street straight towards Mary. He leaped the green ditch, and dashed to the top of a shaking set of steps, whither the enemy could not follow. The carriage was right at his heels. It shot down off the road and across the narrow boards that spanned the ditch, the baby bobbing wildly up and down. They were almost across when the inevitable happened. The carriage swerved, two wheels ran off the narrow bridge, and the occupant pitched headforemost over the side.

Mary leaped forward and caught the little fellow as he fell. She staggered, almost lost her balance, and completely lost her hat, but righted herself by a tremendous effort and sank down upon the sidewalk, the baby held securely in her arms.

The big brother was by her side in an instant, his sharp, freckled face beaming with admiration.

"Say," he shouted, "you done it that time! Hi, there, Sammy, you ain't hurt! You Jones kid, jist wait till I ketch ya!"

He caught up the baby and thumped him down into his carriage again. The little fellow's mouth puckered up, and for a moment he looked as if he were going to cry. Then he saw the strange lady

bending over him and, feeling that she must be the cause of his tumble, he leaned forward and gave her a sounding slap in the face.

The group of children that had collected about the little hero broke into screams of laughter in which Mary found it impossible not to join.

"Hay, ain't he a corker?" chanted the big brother proudly. "You're a Jim Dandy, all right, Sammy, ain't ye?" And Sammy crowed aloud.

He might well crow for his chariot and his charioteer were the champions of the street. When Sam McCann died the spring before, leaving his wife with five children all under twelve, the eldest boy had taken charge of the family, while his mother washed and ironed for the good folk of St. Stephen's up on the hill. Lancelot McCann had been well named. His was a heart set on doughty deeds. A baby brother and a baby-carriage might have become an impediment and a disgrace to an ordinary boy. Lancelot turned them into a weapon of defence. He beat his ploughshare into a sword, and with it cleared the street of his enemies.

Mary found herself the heroine of the adventure. She was escorted triumphantly by the chariot and its retinue all the way to the little house where Bertha was waiting on the door-step.

"I see you've made a conquest of the McCann kiddies," she shouted above the din, as she and Mary dodged across the railway tracks.

"McCann?" cried Mary, looking back. "Not the Mrs. McCann who washes for us?"

"Yes, and for everyone else. Her husband died last spring from diphtheria, one of the many epidemics that infest this place. There are five youngsters for her to support."

"Oh, oh"—Mary felt the tears stinging her eyes. "Oh, Bertha, why do people,—why do we allow it?"

Bertha Evans's fine face grew grave.

"Do you know, Mary, I believe that's the question we must all ask ourselves soon, we who are church members. Those houses are all owned by the Douglas & Clarkson Company. The Clarkson girls buy their clothes with the rents from those houses. But we are all to blame," she added with her accustomed fairness.

They were standing on the town side of the tracks looking back. Bertha pointed past the smoking mills and the noisy trains to where the road ran up along the river into the sweet sunlit spaces of the open country.

"Do you see that white house, up there among the orchard trees? That's where Johnny Petatie lives. Ever meet him? Well, then, you know what he's like. I often tell mother I couldn't bear all the sickness and troubles of Sawdust Alley if I didn't remember that Johnny Petatie's there keeping guard. Come away, you look positively sick. You'll have to hurry or you'll be late for your meeting."

Bertha Evans did not belong to the association that was working for the bells. The girls parted at the post-office and Mary went up the pleasant shady street that led to the cool heights where St. Stephen's stood. But the sound of the mills followed her like a cry.

As she entered the manse gate she heard gay voices in the parlour. The girls had arrived. Mary felt that she could not go in with them just now; she did not care whether St. Stephen's had bells or not. She hurried around to the side door and out to the kitchen. Mrs. McCann, stooped and weary looking, was sprinkling a pile of fragrant linen just brought in from the sunshine. Mary burst in upon her.

"Please don't do one more speck of work this day," she cried. "You're tired out. Here, put them away. I'll sprinkle them this evening. Now, you sit right down. I'm going to make you a cup of tea, and then you're going home."

"Goodness me alive!" cried Mrs. McCann, staggering into the chair in response to Mary's push. "It ain't half-past-four an' there's a good hour's work ahead o' me."

"I'm going to make you a cup of tea," cried Mary, shoving the laundry basket out of sight. "And then you must go right home to that baby of yours. I saw him this afternoon and he's the dearest, darlingest thing that ever happened!"

She darted about the kitchen, making feeble jokes to hide the tears that were struggling to appear. She made a pot of tea, recklessly purloined the best of the sandwiches and cookies intended for the guests, and set the weary, working woman in a cool corner of the veranda.

If Mrs. McCann's tongue had run fast in the morning, it flew now under the smooth oil of Mary's kindness.

Yes, it had been mighty hard since Sam was took, she declared, eating the sandwiches with a relish. Not that Sam was much of a pervider, being always kinda sick, but he was better than nobody. She didn't know how she would have got along at all at first if it hadn't been for Johnny Petatie and his wife. Things weren't so bad in the summer, but in the winters the little girls always had colds. Dr. Peterson said the cellar was to blame on account of so much water in it. Mr. Douglas had promised to have the place drained, but he had forgotten about it.

"Say, that tea's great!" she cried. "I always think the third cup's the best. It seems to get a better grip on the pot."

Mrs. McCann had just left with some cookies for the little warrior when Helen appeared, worried and shocked.

"Mary! I thought you were never coming. It's

after five and tea must be served at once. Everyone has been wondering where you were!"

Mary went slowly into the parlour and passed tea and sandwiches to a circle of silks and muslins and gay ribbons arranged around the cool, dark room. Plans for a great fête to raise money for the bells of St. Stephen's were being discussed volubly.

"Do you know, girls," said Miss Gertrude Graydon, a lovely vision of cool blue organdie, "I feel that we don't fully appreciate the esthetic value of chimes. Think of the influence they will have on the non-churched people. I feel sure that all those poor workmen's families down by the mills will be roused to an appreciation of better things when they hear them. Don't you agree with me, Miss Erskine?" she asked, appealing sweetly to Mary.

"No," said Mary, bluntly, "I don't think so. The mills and the trains make such a noise they will never hear the bells."

CHAPTER IX

THE FOREST OF ARDEN

MORE than a week passed before Mary was able to re-visit Sawdust Alley. For she and Helen were soon plunged into a whirl of activity. Mary had been longing for some work to do in connection with the church, and here it was, surely. The great summer fête planned by the young ladies to raise money for the bell fund took all their time and most of their energy for a week. It consisted of a complex sort of entertainment whereby money could be extracted in a great variety of ways from its patrons.

It commenced by being an afternoon sail up the river on Wawashene's one steamer, "The Wawa Queen," but this was merely the innocent-looking portal into a maze from which the unwary excursionists extricated themselves late at night, exhausted and penniless.

"Let's once get them on board," the eldest Miss Clarkson prophesied, "and we'll get every cent they have."

For this purpose tea and cake were sold on board, also ice-cream and lemonade. The "Wawa Queen"

docked at the foot of the Wawa Falls, and here again were various devices for coaxing money from the merrymakers. A paddle around the foot of the Falls was ten cents. Sandwiches and tea in a big tent, booths of every sort under every tree selling flowers and candy and nick-nacks, caught the unwary at every turn.

"Come away here, Doctor, come away!" cried Dr. Peterson, who was darting about here and there, the life and joy of everything. "Let's have one more dish of ice cream and go home." He caught Dr. Sutherland by the arm and drew him away from the paper flower booth. "I know you don't want ice cream and neither do I; but we've got to keep on buying, so let's buy something we don't have to look at afterwards. Do you know," he added, as one of the Costly Clarksons fluttered away in pink organdie with their order, and another in blue organdie fluttered down upon them with a tray of hand-made necklaces, "Do you know, I'm firmly of the opinion that they held these bazaars in Amos's time. That's what he means where he says, 'It is as if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him'."

Altogether it was a well planned, well carried out scheme. The young ladies received great praise for their energy and skill, and by the time the revellers had paid fifty cents for a sail home in the moonlight, the bells of St. Stephen's were two hundred dollars nearer to St. Stephen's tower.

"I'm just the small end of a rag and Gertrude's dead and buried," groaned Miss Katherine Clarkson, when it was all over. "It's the women's turn now, so Aunt Margaret and her crowd can get to work. We're not going to do one more thing this summer. We're all going up to one of the Muskoka hotels for two weeks' rest. The Loch Lomond house has a perfectly wonderful floor for dancing."

When August came all the week-day activities of St. Stephen's closed for the summer except the prayer meeting. But as there were only about a dozen people who attended it even in winter, it was not much of a tax on the energies of the congregation.

Dr. Sutherland had always taken the month of August for his vacation. He had never failed to spend part of it in Mayfair Valley, but now that he had no need to wander away to seek for a family, as he said, he would just bide at home and have the pleasure of hearing someone else in his pulpit.

Very few of his congregation agreed that it was a pleasure. The minister of St. Stephen's was a preacher far above the average and his people knew it. So, though he strove to give them the best supply the church could provide during his vacation, there was no one who did not welcome him back. Indeed many of the old folk were of the opinion that the summer preachers, even though they once included the moderator of the General Assembly, were not quite as good as St. Stephen's deserved.

Mrs. Evans believed that Dr. Sutherland was a saint as well as a great preacher, and being far on in saintship herself she had never an unkind thought of her pastor. But she came perilously near suspecting him of something less than perfection one summer.

"I sometimes think, Pa," she whispered to her husband on the way home from church. "I sometimes wonder if Dr. Sutherland isn't a bit cuter than we think he is. D'ye notice how he never once gets us a preacher that can come up to himself, when he is away on his holidays?"

"Eh, ye don't think he would be doing it a-purpose now, surely?" asked her husband in alarm lest their idol prove guilty of clay feet.

This unconscious compliment proved too good for their daughter to keep. She repeated it to Dr. Peterson who passed it on to his old friend with dangerous explosions of laughter.

Dr. Sutherland was humbly grateful for his people's appreciation. He gave them the best of which he was capable, and this entailed long hours in his study, which was perhaps one of the reasons why he was better acquainted with the manners and habits of the enemies of ancient Israel than he was with the Philistines of his own congregation.

Mary and Helen were both very happy to remain in Wawashene for the summer. They did not want to leave the pleasant little town with all its holiday stir and bustle. Mary did not confess it even to her

own heart, but she still held the secret hope that the summer would not pass without the Hunter of the Lake appearing some sunny day around the green point of an island. She had even carried on a secret search for him, entirely without success. Hunter and Stewart, the grocers, were old men with no sons, and the young Dr. Hunter, besides being a Baptist, was short and bald, and all his relatives lived in Ireland.

Mary scolded herself for a silly romancer, and decided firmly to forget all about him. And in order to show herself that she was very sensible and matter of fact, she wandered alone one day down the fern-bordered lane that led to her green nook on the lake shore. The little grove was delightfully cool and still. The afternoon breeze had lost its way somewhere out beyond the ring of islands, and the curving bay lay as still as a mirror, the blue heavens and the green shore smiling in its limpid depths.

She seated herself upon the white rock, drew off her shoes and stockings, and boldly slipped her tired feet into the cool water. She smiled at the thought of how shocked Helen would be. She leaned back against one of the ivory pillars of her palace and gave herself up to serious thought. Something had gone wrong with her plans. She had come to St. Stephen's with such high ambitions. She had been here over a month and what had she done? Nothing but help a little in the big bazaar, where a great

many fashionable young ladies each strove to excel the other. And Bertha Evans and all the girls of Mrs. Graydon's class had been conspicuously left out of the affair by Mrs. Graydon's own daughter. It was all a sad puzzle to Mary.

"I must do better than this," she declared. "But what can I do?"

She was looking straight up into the green canopy above, where a wood peewee was singing his plaintive little melody, and for the first time she noticed that, right over her head, hung a square sheet of birch bark. She reached up and pulled it down. There was writing on it, though it was blurred from exposure to sunshine and rain, but she managed to decipher it.

Now the stars have faded
In the purple chill,
Lo, the sun is kindling
On the eastern hill.

Tree by tree the forest
Takes the golden tinge,
As the shafts of glory
Pierce the summit's fringe.

Like a shining angel
To the birch grove's door,
Shod with hope and silence
Day is come once more.

Then, as if in sorrow
That you are not here,
All his magic beauties
Grey and disappear.

Mary's heart gave a great leap. Could it be possible that the Hunter—— No, it was absurd, she assured herself. Someone else had left this sylvan message for his lady who had failed to meet him. She read the verses over again, her breath coming faster, her eyes shining. She knew Bliss Carman's poem and saw the subtle changes that had been made to suit the scene. She wondered, . . . She sat dreaming happily. Perhaps he had passed here at sunrise on his way back to that world of freedom where he lived, he had halted his canoe here and stepped out on her white rock and waited, waited till the day had fully come,——

“Then as if in sorrow
That you are not here”——

To Mary the day had suddenly taken on all the golden glory of that sunrise. With trembling fingers she carefully stripped a thin layer off the written side, calling herself a romantic fool as she carefully put it away in her bag. She found a pencil in the bottom of the same receptacle. Then she sat long in thought, and finally, with flushed cheeks and eyes brighter than usual, she carefully wrote some verses from the same little book.

“Sitting idly for an hour
Where the elder is in flower,

I can hear the lake gulls call,
Out beyond the island wall.

Musing in the scented heat
Where the jewel-plant is sweet,

I can see the shadows run
O'er the lake floor in the sun.

Thus I pass the gate of time
And the boundaries of clime,

Change the ugly man-made street
For God's country green and sweet."

She fastened it up in its place again tremblingly. If he wrote the first one and if he should return and read hers, and if——

She stopped, laughing at all the *ifs* she was piling up to obstruct the path of the little white messenger. They really meant nothing to Mary; she was as sure the birch-bark letter was for her as if she had found it in Uncle John's box in the post-office with her name and address on it.

She was sitting in a rosy day dream when around the point that screened her from the town came the bow of a canoe. Mary hastily drew her feet under her and looked out in dismay. What if——? But a second glance told her the canoeist was not her rescuer. The light craft wobbled dangerously from side to side, while the uncertain canoeist took, now a feathery stroke that sent the foam splashing up around him, and now a deep plunge of his paddle that threatened to upset him entirely.

Mary suddenly stood up, forgetting her bare feet.

"Goodness, gracious, Peter Erskine!" she cried in amazement.

Peter gave a jump that almost overturned his frail craft.

He had just one quotation from Shakespeare with which he was always ready, and he used it only on occasions of overwhelming misfortune. He felt that this was one requiring it.

"Worms and graves and epitaphs!" he groaned.

For a moment brother and sister stared at each other and then each burst out laughing. Mutual explanations followed. Peter had "gone shares" with one of the fellows, Billy Coles, and rented the canoe for the summer. No, he hadn't said anything about it because Helen would be sure to go up in the air and think he was going to a watery grave. But, pshaw! you were safer in this old scow than you were in the church. You couldn't upset it if you tried. He grew less apologetic when he saw Mary's bare feet.

"Oh, I say, wait till I tell Nell! What on earth are you doin' away down here alone?"

Mary did not make such a full confession. This was the little bay where she and Bertha came so often. "'The Ivory Palace,' you know; isn't it lovely, Pete?" she asked, devoutly hoping that the birch bark missive was hidden from his eyes. But fortunately Peter was not given to noticing his surroundings keenly.

"Say, this is a jolly spot, all right, but it's no place to fish—too shallow. What were you doing?" he asked wonderingly. "Just sittin' on a rock lookin' at the water! Well, my eye! I don't see what fun there is in that. Why don't you go an' sit on a stone in the back yard? There's plenty of them there, you bet."

Mary pulled on her shoes and stockings while Peter waited for her, stretched at full length in the canoe.

"Say, I vote for this, Molly," he said with a happy sigh. "Paddlin's all right but it gets a fellow's back."

The wood peewee's tender note came softly out of the green depths of the grove, the swell from passing launches lifted and gently rocked the canoe.

Peter could identify each craft by the sound of its engine, as he watched them racing merrily across the blue floor of the lake out beyond the islands.

That was the Costly Clarksons', that big green one slapping and pounding its way through the water, making a big fuss, just like the girls coming up the church aisle on Sunday. That one that sounded like a cantering horse on a hard road belonged to Rich Harding. He was taking a load of fellows down to Barbay to a tennis tournament. Awful dude, that Rich Harding; thought he owned the town 'cause his father was a bank manager. He never even got through High School, the teachers

couldn't pound anything into him. Did she hear that fussy little thing that went tap-tap-tap like a tack-hammer? That was Alf Cole's little old tub,—Bill's brother. Billy said he'd rather not have any than a thing that sounded like a type-writer. Ah, did she hear that? That was a beauty! That was Graham Douglas's big boat. There wasn't anything like it on the lake. Listen how it went swish-swish, whirr-whirr—sounded like a big cat purring.

"Oh, say, it would be great to be rich and have a big car and a launch and everything like that fellow has, Molly."

"Oh, don't say that, Pete!" burst out Mary sitting up straight, "I don't want you to be rich. Money spoils people. It makes them selfish, and they think of nothing but making more money."

Peter was inclined to argue the matter. He thought that money was a very fine commodity indeed, and he could do with a great deal more than he had at present, which was about ten cents a month.

"I wonder what it must be like to be Morgan or Carnegie or some of those guys. Say, a fellow could lie down all the time, couldn't he?" he asked, gazing with a sigh into the green canopy over his head.

They made a very uncertain but very enjoyable voyage back. Peter showed off his boat-house proudly. It was almost a ruin tilted on one side like an old man leaning on his elbow. But Mary was so full of enthusiasm over it and the canoe that Peter's

heart warmed to complete confidence. The secret had been weighing rather heavily on his conscience. He charged her solemnly to keep it.

“But wouldn’t it be nice to bring Uncle John out in it some day now that he has his holidays?” Mary suggested tactfully. After some more persuasion Peter agreed that it would and so the full confession was made to the family that evening at tea time in the form of an invitation.

That was the beginning of many happy family picnics. Dr. Sutherland declared he was too old for a canoe, but they hired a boat and he or Mary rowed while Peter splashed joyously ahead in his canoe piloting them to some place where they could build a fire and make tea. Mary carefully avoided her magic grove on these excursions. She did not dare to run the risk of Peter’s entering her Forest of Arden and discovering the use Rosalind was making of the trees. But she never failed to make a brief excursion thither to see if her letter had been received.

The only one who did not thoroughly enjoy these little outings was Helen. She watched with longing eyes the beautiful launches that sped up and down the lake.

“That’s Mr. Douglas’s, Mary,” she said one day, as a long graceful yacht in flashing white and silver appeared between the islands and disappeared again.

"It's simply glorious to sail in it. I do wish you hadn't missed it. I wonder if he'll ask us again."

She had not long to wait for her answer. That very evening while Mary was watering the lawn, with some intermittent help from Peter, the gate swung open and Graham Douglas came up the walk.

There was no time to run away. Mary turned towards him, a vivid remembrance of the last time she had received him dyeing her cheeks.

"Good evening, Miss Erskine," he said cordially, and his half-amused smile made Mary's temper rise. "Is Dr. Sutherland in?"

"Good evening," said Mary distantly. "No, Dr. Sutherland is at a session meeting." She stood inhospitably in the middle of the path. "He won't be home until very late," she added unkindly.

But Helen, who had been reading on the veranda, came down the steps in time to save Mary from the awful mistake of turning away Graham Douglas from the door.

"Oh, Mr. Douglas," she said graciously, "won't you come up to the veranda and wait? I'm sure Uncle Sutherland will be in presently. He is just over at the church."

"Why, Helen," cried the truthful Mary, "he's at a session meeting, and you know Uncle John never gets home from one until after eleven o'clock!"

"Mary!" gasped Helen in dismay, but Graham Douglas laughed aloud.

“Well, I’ll come and sit on the veranda for a few minutes,” he said to Helen, “if your sister won’t turn the hose on me. But I promise I won’t stay till eleven, Miss Mary.”

Mary laughed too, though rather unwillingly. They sat down behind the cool vines of the veranda, while Peter slipped away through the back garden and off down the street. Mary was disappointed. She had intended to ask Bertha to go down to Mrs. McCann’s this evening. But Graham Douglas apparently forgot his promise, for he stayed very late indeed. The soft summer twilight deepened, the violet tinted electric lights blossomed high up in the trees. Laughing groups of girls and young men passed through the light and shade. The air was heavy with the perfume of newly watered gardens and the damp, sweet odours of the wet grass. The rose-shaded lamps which nearly every house on the hill possessed, and which were Helen’s envy, appeared in the lace-draped windows up and down the street, and from the open windows gramophone music was pouring forth. Musical tastes varied on the Avenue. From between Mrs. Harding’s rose-point curtains floated snatches of Grand Opera; while from across the street, where the Costly Clarksons were drinking lemonade on the veranda with all the bank-clerks of the town, came Harry Lauder’s Doric accents telling of the joys of “Roamin’ in the Gloamin’.”

Automobiles bumped and honked and flashed up and down. The streets of Wawashene and the surrounding country roads made motoring a very painful operation; nevertheless, everyone who could afford a car owned one and went bumping forth in it every evening up and down the stony roads with unabated enthusiasm. But, whether afoot or riding, everyone who passed St. Stephen's manse that evening was keenly aware of the fact that Graham Douglas was spending the evening with Dr. Sutherland's nieces, while the Doctor himself was attending a session meeting.

CHAPTER X

“CORRARY”

MARY had become quite well acquainted with Johnny Petatie by this time. He came trundling up through the town twice a week with his horse and light wagon and sold a few vegetables, and gave away a great many more, all with the air of a landed proprietor dispensing gifts to his tenants. He never failed to pay a call at the manse and Mary, as well as Dr. Sutherland, always found time for a chat with him.

“Good morning,” he would say, as he entered the kitchen like a ray of sunshine, “and what can I be lending you of the Lord’s bounty, to-day, Miss Mary? Here’s one of His roses, now”—holding up a purple cabbage—“a violet-coloured rose; think of it! A botanist would journey round the world to see roses of such a size and colour, and we swallow them down and do not even thank the Father who fashioned them!”

Then he would sit down on the veranda steps and talk. He had three subjects upon which he grew eloquent: his experience as a teacher of the Wawa-shene youth; his son David, whose virtues were beyond praise; and, above all, the great bounty of

his Heavenly Father who had, all his life, opened the windows of heaven and poured out blessing upon him.

Mary soon discovered that, in spite of his unfailing joyousness, he carried with him always the burden of Sawdust Alley. When Mrs. McCann fell into disfavour with the neighbours through the activities of Lancelot and his Juggernaut car, when Mrs. Greeves's roof leaked, or the Carters were behind with their rent, Johnny Petatie always proved a friend in need. And every Sunday afternoon he gathered the noisy little folk of the place together in his own home and taught them something about their Heavenly Father.

Mary often thought wistfully of that little Sunday school as she sat in Mrs. Graydon's class trying to keep awake. She was beginning to find Sawdust Alley as alluring as the Ivory Palace. She found there an outlet for her longing to serve those less fortunate than herself, a longing that St. Stephen's had, so far, failed to satisfy. She found there, too, the secret of Bertha Evans' serenity and, through her, she was introduced to the population. There was the large-nosed Goldstein family, whose father kept the dirty little grocery at the corner; the little round, black-eyed Italians who had changed their name from Quintana to Quinsy, thinking it sounded more English; the huge family of woolly-headed little mulattoes, looking strangely out of

place in their northern home, and a half-dozen black-eyed, merry, French-Canadian households, so populous that Mary felt sure they each reached the Habitant standard,—“Nice lettle Canadian familee, ’leven boy, thirteen girl.”

Mary soon knew them all as well as Bertha did. She visited the melancholy Mrs. Greeves who lay in bed in her shaky little house between the railroad tracks. She became the friend and confidante of her son, poor, simple-minded Danny, who tried so hard to support his mother by doing odd jobs about the mill. She became acquainted with the joys and sorrows of the six Jones children and their consumptive mother, and the four Carter children who had no mother at all, and she became an intimate friend of the McCann family and Lancelot the eldest boy was her sworn champion.

She went to the mill Flats alone one day to see how Sammy was behaving, and found the whole street had followed Lancelot on a fishing expedition up the river. So she went on past the sawdust and the bustling mill yards and the railway tracks up to the higher ground above the river where Johnny Petatie’s home gleamed white through the orchard trees. It was a relief to breathe the air of the open country again. Between the road and the river lay a low, swampy shore, choked with waving grasses and rushes. Red-winged blackbirds flashed over it in the sunlight. Above it swallows wheeled and

dipped and soared; a blue kingfisher flew shouting away across the brown water.

Mary passed around a clump of cedars and came into full view of Johnny Petatie's garden. She stood in the dusty path by the roadside and stared at it. The little old man had let his artist spirit have way and had painted a masterpiece on the acre of ground that sloped down from his cottage to the road.

Against the soft green of the orchard trees stood a stately hedge of holly hocks and velvet dahlias: a glorious display. A patch of vivid larkspur on either side of the white gate marked the entrance from the road, and a forest of golden sunflowers hid the path that led to the barn behind the house. Between each row of vegetables ran fairy hedges of sweet peas, and the gladioli beds held up flaming swords of colour.

Mary clasped her hands rapturously. "Oh!" she cried aloud, "oh, how lovely!"

"Ah, well, well, now, now, now, I knew you would like it!" Johnny Petatie rose up suddenly from behind a hedge of currant bushes rubbing his hands delightedly. "I knew it!" he cried boastfully. "I said to Mother after I saw you making your garden at the manse, I said, 'Mother, Miss Mary will enjoy our garden when she sees it.' Yes, indeed, I said it!"

He hurried towards her and pulled open a little gate that led from the corner of the field to the road.

"You are welcome to Corrary, Miss Erskine," he

said, with a very stately air, holding his old straw hat in his hand as she passed through. "Come away up to the house," he continued excitedly. "This is a great day for Mother and me!"

"But you are busy. I must not take you from your work," apologised Mary, looking down at the hammer and saw he had flung upon the ground.

"Oh, indeed, it's just a bit of a job I was finishing. I was making a gate, so that anybody who wanted a drink could get it from this well here. It's a long way for poor Mrs. McCann to come up here and then go round by the front gate and up to the house."

"Mrs. McCann!" cried Mary. "Surely she doesn't come up here for water."

"Oh, yes, they all come up here for drinking water," he declared brightly. "You see, the mill Flats are not in the town limits, and so they haven't the water works, poor things. And it's too near the river for good wells. And yet up here I have two wells, one up at the house and this one down here." He pointed to a little red pump and a new platform standing a few yards off. "But come away now, come away. I'm keeping you standing; step over on the grass; this is my bean field, the kind the Doctor likes."

"But are you making a gate just for your neighbours to come in and use your well?" asked Mary as they made their way along the border of the field. "Oh, of course, of course," he cried, smiling at her

radiantly. "Why, I had one good well up at the house, and it did us all, never went dry once, though it used to threaten us in the dry summers. So I tried for water down at this corner and there it was! The Father struck the rock and out came the fountain of Meribah. And when I saw it I felt as David did when the three mighty men brought him the water from the well of Bethlehem. I felt I ought to pour it out before the Lord, and just then that poor young lass of Tom Carter's came up with her wee bit of a pail for water, and away around by the gate she went, and up to the house. And so I said to the Mother, 'I must make a gate, down beside my new well; and we'll call it the well of Bethlehem.' And there it is—just finished for you to come through! I'm not a bad carpenter for an old school-teacher, now, am I?"

He pointed out his melons and his grape arbour, as they walked towards the house. Yonder were the giant tomatoes he was going to show at the Wawa-shene Fair, and here were his prize pumpkins.

They were in the flower garden now, and Mary could make but slow progress. Here were all the dear old friends that Aunt Effie's garden at home held: phlox, sweet-william, rosemary, bachelors' buttons, canterbury bells, and lovely borders of pansies and mignonette. The veranda of the white house was covered with clematis, and on either side of the stone door-step grew a lilac bush. When a

collie dog and a white cat came down the steps to meet them, Mary felt everything was complete.

Old Johnny opened the wire screen door into a low-ceiled room. To Mary's surprise, it was richly furnished. There were luxurious chairs, a great wide many-cushioned couch that would have delighted Helen before the fire-place, shelves filled with books, and some good pictures on the walls. But mixed with the pretty furnishings were all the equipment of a school room. A blackboard was set up on the polished table, a map of the Holy Land was hung over a brown Corot, and illuminated texts were tacked all around the walls.

"This is the room our Davy furnished for us," said the old man proudly. "He makes us use it when he's home but as soon as his back is turned, Mother and I are in the kitchen again. Davy says we're both like Mr. Boffin!"

He seated her in the most comfortable of the luxurious chairs and stood before her, his blue eyes shining.

"Eh, eh, this is a great day for us," he cried, rubbing his hands, "a great day indeed. And now, if you are rested, could you come and see the Mother? I do not like her to miss a moment. Well, well, what will she say?" he cried gleefully.

He opened a door leading into the kitchen. It was a large, airy room, with a big cookstove in one corner, a table with a red cotton cover, and rag

mats on the clean pine floor. A breeze from the river blew in gently through the muslin draped window, and beside it, in a rocking chair, sat an old lady. She was dressed in black, with a little purple knitted shawl about her shoulders and a black lace cap on her wavy white hair.

She made a beautiful picture, except for her hands. They were swollen and twisted with rheumatism, and lay helplessly on the open Bible in her lap. Her deep blue eyes were looking out across a field of white flowering buckwheat to the lazy brown river. She did not turn at their entrance, and the old man touched her gently on the arm and motioned towards Mary.

"Eh, is it herself?" she asked, in the soft hushed voice of the very deaf; her face radiant. She stumbled out of her chair with the old man's help and clasped Mary's hands in both her crippled ones.

"Well, well, well, and you would be coming at last!" she whispered, in the slow, sweet accents that are the Highland Scottish birthright. "It's Miss Erskine, isn't it?" Mary nodded. "Ah, yes, I knew! And you will be the one my husband calls 'the angel'? I know that, too, by your beautiful hair and your eyes."

Mary blushed and Johnny Petatie shook his finger at his wife. "There now, Mother," he shouted, "you've gone and told on me!"

She gave him an affectionate slap. "Eh, he's the

great admirer of the young ladies. He tries to hide it from me, but I find him out!"

They laughed at each other like a pair of children, and led Mary back into the Best Room and seated her on the wide couch with a pile of cushions at her back.

Then Tilly Cameron, the maid of all work, had to be called in to be shown the guest.

"Come away in, Tilly, come away, and see what we've got here!" cried Mrs. Hill. "Father, call Tilly, she doesn't know we've got a visitor."

Tilly came hurrying in drying her hands on her blue checked apron, and as full of welcome as her mistress. Indeed Mary was rather puzzled to know whether Mrs. Hill or Tilly were the mistress. Miss Cameron was a tall strong Scotch woman of some fifty years, who apparently owned the farm and supported the Hills by her efforts.

"Ye'll jist have to excuse me," she said squeezing Mary's hand in her large damp one. "I jist ran in to bid ye welcome, an I'll have to run away. A buddy that's got a house and a farm an' chickens an' all on their hands can't be settin' much. Come again, come again, ye're fine an' welcome!"

Old Johnny ran to the pantry for a plate of cookies, and down cellar for a bottle of grape cordial, and out to the orchard for a basket of his early apples, and then back to the garden for some rare gladioli that Mary must take home to her uncle.

And Mary sat on the big couch and listened to the old lady tell of Davy's virtues; a recital that was swelled into a duet whenever Johnny Petatie returned from one of his errands.

There was something about Mrs. Hill that vaguely reminded Mary of someone, she could not remember who. Her wrinkled face was kind and peaceful, her blue eyes were young and radiant like her husband's. She was a cripple, suffering much pain, and confined to the house, but her face bore not the slightest trace of fretfulness.

"I wonder if it's Aunt Effie she reminds me of," Mary said to herself.

She could communicate with the old lady only by smiles and nods, but there was no need to take any part in the conversation. The story of David flowed on without a moment's hesitation, mingled with praises of her husband.

These were Davy's books, he was the great lad for poetry; and that was Davy's chair; and he sent the big couch to his mother at Christmas when he could not come home, and the big lamp with the round shade to his father on his last birthday.

"But, indeed, Father says it is nothing but a circus tent," whispered the old lady, laughing softly, "he says he would rather have his old coal oil lamp than all the electric lights in Wawashene."

"But the sofa is a grand thing on the Sabbath," declared old Johnny, who had just returned with the

grape cordial. "It makes a fine bed for the wee ones."

"Oh, do you hold your Sunday school in this beautiful room?" asked Mary, suddenly understanding the map and the blackboard.

"Ah, but it is not our room," said Johnny Petatie in a hushed voice. "Mother and I just dedicated it to the Lord the day after Davy had it all fixed up, and now we hold His school in it. And we had twelve last Sabbath!"

"Davy is away so much," Mrs. Hill was saying, having been whispering away all through the conversation. "That is really our only trial. We haven't set eyes on him now for a month."

"He's up beyond Lake Wawa surveying the new railway line," interposed the father.

"We hope he'll be home before winter"—this from the mother. "It's always summer when Davy's here."

"He'll be sure to come back with the flowers in spring," said Johnny Petatie with his radiant smile. The hymn of praise to David had grown into an antiphonal song; the mother, not hearing anyone else, sang her part independently, and the father came in with his response whenever an opening could be secured.

"Eh, the dear Lord has blessed us abundantly in our boy, Miss Erskine. He wants Father to give

up this little bit of land and move up into the town——”

“Indeed, it’s an old idler he’d make of me——”

“But he could not get on without his garden, and I would not know what to do away from the river——”

“There’s no danger of Davy making her go if she doesn’t want to——”

“We came here after we were married, when Father gave up the teaching, and Davy was just a wee bit lad. And we just couldn’t leave it now. We called it Corrary after my father’s home in Islay. The river here reminded me of the burn at home. Were you ever in Scotland, Miss Erskine? Eh, that’s the bonnie place, especially the Hielans. Davy says he’s going to take me and Father home some day, but I tell him we’ve been here too long. Old roots go down too deep to be transplanted. Oh, Johnny, run and get the album. Miss Erskine hasn’t seen Davy’s picture.”

The album proved to be an old-fashioned, highly-ornamented one, in a red plush cover. Davy’s picture was on the first page. It showed a shy looking boy of about Peter’s age. Davy was a poor hand at getting his picture taken, his mother explained. This was the only one they had since he was a baby.

Mary looked at the bright, boyish face and, like his mother’s, it vaguely reminded her of someone.

Johnny Petatie had gone out for the apples, and

Mrs. Hill showed Mary through the album. There were aunts in wide hoop skirts and uncles in side whiskers, little girls in pantalettes and little boys in top boots.

"And this is Davy's father," whispered the old lady when the last picture was reached.

Mary looked at it with some surprise. It was the picture of a young man, but it showed no faintest resemblance to what Johnny Petatie might have been at that age.

Before any further remarks could be made upon it, old Johnny touched his wife's arm and shouted that he must take Mary down to the back field to see his celery beds.

Mary had to tear herself away. The good-byes took almost as long as the visit; her hostess accompanied her to the veranda, her host to the gate.

"This has been an angel's visit," he said, as he put a sheaf of gladioli into her arms at the gate between the blue larkspurs. "Yes, indeed, an angel's visit, and not one that is unaware, either. You couldn't be hidden, indeed."

CHAPTER XI

AFTERNOON TEA

WHEN Mary reached the narrow plank walk of Sawdust Alley she was surprised to find Mrs. McCann at home. As usual when she had a few hours' leisure, she had turned the house inside out and was giving it a tremendous cleaning. The scarred furniture was scattered out on the sidewalk, and over the sawdust heaps of the back yard, and Mrs. McCann was on her knees scouring the floor in floods of soapy water.

"Is that you, Miss Erskine?" she shouted joyously, above the din of the mills and the noise of her scrubbing brush. "Come on in. I was jist sayin' to myself, 'I'm gonta quit work for a min'it an' have a cup-a-tea'; an' here you are; an' you just gotta come in an' have one with me! The kids is all away off up the river; Lancie's with them, so I guess they're all right."

Mary stepped carefully over the wet floor. "I'll come if you keep on with your work and let me make the tea," she said, sniffing the cool clean atmosphere gratefully.

"Well, I ain't a gonta fight with you about it,"

Mrs. McCann dropped to her knees again. "I know you can make it a heap sight better'n' I can, an' I'd give a good bit to get this place serubbed up 'fore I quit."

Mary knew every corner of the McCann household. From behind the stove she unearthed the old brown tea pot, found the cracked sugar bowl and the noseless pitcher with a little skimmed milk in it, and proceeded to make a festival out of them. She spread a clean towel on an old upturned soap box, and set half her gladioli sheaf in the centre of it, in an old glass fruit jar. Beside it she placed a plate of Mrs. Hill's cookies and set the little table outside in the shade of the house. Then she made the tired woman come out and sit on the back steps where the breeze blew up from the river.

Mrs. McCann sank heavily upon the steps with a sigh of pleasure. "I feel like the Queen an' all the Royal Family," she cried happily. "Look at all the style, will ye? Well, it's kinda queer, but do you know, there's somethin' about havin' flowers an' fol-me-rols around that kinda rests a body, after all."

The little white box-table with its glowing centre-piece was the one oasis of beauty in the surroundings. Mrs. McCann's yard was a Sahara desert of sawdust and kindling wood, and ash barrels and garbage. Beyond it stretched the lumber yard. Through the yawning doorway of the mill they could see swift wheels whirling and catch the gleam of a saw. Dark

figures moved to and fro, there was a constant hum and scream punctuated by the banging of heavy boards. From the wide doorway trucks of clean, sweet-smelling lumber moved out slowly to be added to the growing towers that were steadily building up along the river bank. Beyond a high fence rose the grey bulk of the flour mill. A cloud of white dust issued from its doorway and drifted away yellow in the sunshine.

"Yessir," declared Mrs. McCann, taking a second cup of the fragrant hot tea and a third cookie. "I oughta be at Mrs. Dick Ellwood's right this min'it. But I ain't; that's all." She laughed easily, showing that except to have an occasional tooth pulled she had not counted a dentist among her acquaintances. "I told her I wouldn't go back if her kids didn't quit cuttin' up. I'm thinkin' o' givin' Mrs. Ellwood the go-by, anyhow."

Mary tried not to smile. It was certainly no joke for Mrs. Ellwood. The "go-by" was a blight on any housekeeper in the town, and well Mrs. McCann knew it. Mrs. Ellwood was one of the most fashionable of St. Stephen's young married set, and a rival of the Clarksons; nevertheless, Mrs. Sam McCann of Sawdust Alley was a lady even she dared not offend. For Mrs. McCann was worth her weight in gold to those for whom she worked, though she made but a bare living. She was more sought after than Mrs. Kirkwall, who was aunt to Graham Doug-

las, and her employers had to keep a tidy house if they expected to retain her on their visiting list. It was a social disgrace to any housekeeper to have it known that Mrs. McCann had dropped her.

"I hope you won't give us the go-by," said Mary, pouring her another cup of tea.

"Not much danger," cried Mrs. McCann, giving her an affectionate glance, which even the streaks of perspiration and dust on her face could not prevent from being a beautiful thing. "No, siree, even if I didn't like yous girls, I'd never forsake the Doctor. He's always been the good friend to us. And when my Sam died last spring I couldn't a-got through if it hadn't a-been for him. I never could abide that sour old body he had there keepin' house for him; but I'd never quit for all that. I usta say to her, 'Well, Mrs. McTavish,' I says, 'I'll always wash and clean for 'Dr. Sutherland anyhow, even if you are an old vinegar bottle.' But I think I'll give Mrs. Ellwood the go-by. Them kids o' hers are too many for me. I can't stand them all day and then come home and listen to my own five screechin' and cuttin' up. I nearly give Mrs. Kirkwall the go-by, too, last week. She's gotta make them lazy lumps o' hers keep a tidier kitchen or it's good night for me. And then there's that room they call the den. Graham Douglas is always havin' his swell friends there, smokin' and playin' cards; an' its never swep' right unless I do it. I often wonder what old Douglas

would say if he was to know all Graham's goin's on. His father was a good old man, was old Douglas. Mind you, him and my Sam's pa was in partnership in the old days, would you believe it? They had a little saw-mill up there by the Wawa Falls, an' old Douglas was jist as poor as any of us then. Him and Grandpa had equal shares then, and we oughta have equal shares to-day. But Graham Douglas did for us all right. Jist as soon as his father died he got rid of Sam and Sam's pa. You wouldn't believe it, Miss Erskine, the mean trick he done. I suppose Dr. Sutherland wouldn't believe it, but you can ask Johnny Petatie, he'll tell you. Graham Douglas wanted to take them rich Clarksons in partnership and he just turned his old partners off; that's what he done. Sam's pa didn't have no writin's, and he felt that bad it jist killed him when he found out he'd lost everything.'

Mary made an effort to change the subject.

"Did I tell you that Mr. Hill wants you to send Lancie up for some new potatoes?" she asked suddenly.

In spite of her wrongs, Mrs. McCann was not of a nature to brood over them. The subject of Johnny Petatie and all his kind acts was much more to her mind. She launched out into it and the sailing was much pleasanter.

"Do you and the little ones ever find it possible to go to church?" Mary asked gently, when the

subject of Johnny Petatie's Sunday school was being dealt with.

Mrs. McCann considered. "No, I can't say we do. The trouble is, I ain't exactly attached to any church. I've always thought there shouldn't be them different secks. I believe in bein' broad-minded. My Sam was an awful broad-minded man. He'd never take up with any one church. He said they was all alike to him, 'cause he never went to any. The only church he had a spite at was St. Stephen's, and that was on account of Graham Douglas bein' such a big man there. Mind you, I ain't sayin' anythin' against St. Stephen's; there's some o' the best folks in the town there. There's Mrs. Graydon, an' she's a saint if there ever was one; an' Miss Evans and Dr. Peterson; and Johnny Petatie himself goes there but I think he's a Plymouth Rock or some such thing as that, they say."

Mary discovered, after some more fruitless questionings, that Mrs. McCann's mind regarding the simplest facts of the Christian faith was as dark as though she lived in the heart of Africa, and yet she had spent all her life under the very shadow of St. Stephen's; and she worked every day in the homes of its members: women who were pledged to spread the Gospel that was proclaimed from its pulpit.

Mary left her, scouring away, much cheered by the visit, and took her way along the hot plank walk, pondering much on the injustice of life. As she was

stepping out into the road a long, handsome car came sweeping down the slope from the town and bumped across the railway tracks. Mary was standing to let it pass, but it stopped suddenly with a screeching of brakes right beside her.

"Won't you get in and let me take you home, Miss Erskine?" called Graham Douglas's pleasant voice. "I want to run into the mill office for just an instant, but I'm coming right back."

Mary had a sudden dismaying vision of herself driving in Graham Douglas's luxurious car past Mrs. McCann scouring off her front steps.

"Oh, no, thank you, I'm sorry, but I really couldn't," she cried, with a haste that was not quite polite. "I'm sorry, but I'm in a hurry," she added, making matters rather worse. He looked at her a moment as though he were going to urge the matter; then he thought better of it, touched his hat and was gone.

"Well," said Mary to herself, as she hurried across the tracks and up the street, "Helen would never forgive me if she ever found that out. Another secret! I'm getting too many for the good of my conscience."

She had scarcely got beyond the dust of the trains when once more she was offered a ride. This time it was an old, tired-looking horse and a buggy with great cakes of dried mud hanging to the wheels that pulled up beside her.

"Hello, what luck I'm in," cried the driver. "Come along and let me drive you home."

"Oh, Dr. Peterson, how lovely!" cried Mary, running around to the side and climbing in, entirely forgetting that she had just refused a ride home. She scrambled up on to the end of the seat that was tilted high in the air, her light weight making very little change in the perilous angle of its inclination.

"You don't seem able to hold down your end very well. We must look like Hiawatha and the squirrel in the canoe," he cried. "Well, where have you been this warm afternoon?"

Mary told him and he looked at her with an admiring glance. "Now that's great, when you remember that all the young folk are either out on the lake or up at the Country Club. If you and Bertha can manage to turn the eyes of St. Stephen's down in this direction, my dear, it will be their salvation as well as a blessing to Sawdust Alley."

"Bertha says the people in our church are very kind whenever there is a case of need," Mary ventured. "They always give her clothes or food when she asks for it."

"Hang the clothes and food! When will people find out that that's not the way to treat the poor? Rubbing cold cream on your ribs to cure cancer of the stomach! Who wants their old chiffon waists and their bread puddings? Those poor women down there, like Mrs. McCann and Mrs. Goldstein and

old mother Greeves need something to feed and clothe their souls. St. Stephen's hands them out their last year's coats and some left over hash that they were going to throw away, and says, 'Be ye warmed and fed'."

Mary did not like to hear even so good a friend as Dr. Peterson criticising St. Stephen's adversely.

"I wish some of them would come to church," she ventured.

He shook his head. "They never will as long as St. Stephen's is what it is."

Mary was silent for a few minutes as they drove along slowly under the overhanging elms. "Dr. Peterson," she said at last, timidly, "what's the matter with St. Stephen's?"

He shot a keen glance at her. "Who said there was anything the matter with it?" he asked with a smile.

"There must be," faltered Mary, "when the poor people won't come to it, and there are so few come to the missionary meetings, and Bertha can get only a dozen girls to join her mission circle, and there are only about twenty people ever come to prayer meeting, and Mr. Austin says that you're the only teacher in the Sunday school that takes an interest in his class."

Mary poured it all out in a rush, feeling as if she were an arch traitor as she uttered the words.

"Tut, tut, child, things surely are in a bad way if

there aren't any teachers better than an old fellow like me. But things aren't quite so hopeless, though they're bad enough. Your uncle often talks about it to me. Things started on the down grade about ten years ago. It was the year that Wawashene had the boom and everybody got well off. The Lord gave us our heart's desire, which was material prosperity, and with it He gave us leanness of soul. But I'm not blaming anyone more than myself. I often think my own soul is wasted away to a skeleton. Perhaps the good Lord will send us something to 'stir the dry bones.' "

Behind them a car was giving forth loud, impatient honkings, but the Doctor did not swerve one hair's breadth from his position in the middle of the street. His eyes twinkled as a big car dodged past them, barely escaping the pavement. Mary's cheeks became a guilty red as the driver darted a glance towards her. It would be rather awkward to explain how she had found time, in her great haste, to go ambling slowly homeward behind Dr. Peterson's old horse.

The Doctor burst into one of his loud, explosive laughs. "It does me good to see those fast drivers climb out on to the sidewalk like that. That'll teach him to let his old horn yowl at me."

The Doctor had not yet yielded to the desire for a car which had seized all the rest of Wawashene. He still drove his old horse at a jogging pace up

and down the streets, and took an improper delight in crowding his swifter rivals off the highway.

"Now, there's one of the reasons that Sawdust Alley don't come to church," he said, pointing his whip after the swiftly vanishing car. "Graham Douglas is a good, all round fellow, but he hasn't found out yet that there are human beings working for him. He thinks there's just machinery in his mill."

"Did he . . . ?" Mary hesitated, wondering if she were doing wrong in asking, but feeling she must know. "Mrs. McCann seems to think that he didn't treat her husband and his father quite fairly, . . . I was wondering if it could be quite true."

"It's true all right, I'm afraid. Graham's been a little too keen on business sometimes just to discern what was the really honest course. Well, well," he added, turning a bright face upon Mary, "we are all prone to leave undone the things we should have done.

" 'Then gently scan thy brother man,' is one of the best lines Bobby Burns ever wrote."

He pulled up at the Manse gate and turned the muddy wheel to allow Mary to alight. "I made him run in the straight and narrow way for a minute there, though, didn't I?" he asked gleefully. "I bet he took a shaving off Joe Harrison's boulevard!" And he drove away chuckling.

CHAPTER XII

"WHEN MOTHERS WENT SAILING"

MARY found Helen and Peter busy getting the evening meal, Helen full of joyous details of her first golf match. The Costly Clarksons had called, just after Mary left, and taken her out to the links in their car.

"They want us to join, Mary, and we really must if it doesn't cost too much. Mrs. Dick Ellwood served tea at the club house. She is perfectly lovely, Mary, and dresses exquisitely. The Ellwoods are the very best people in St. Stephen's, Kit Clarkson says."

"Well, they won't be long," declared Mary. "Mrs. Ellwood's doom has been written on her kitchen wall. She's going to get the go-by. By the way, I was at a tea, too."

"Really? Where? I thought you and Bertha went down to the Mill Flats."

"That didn't prevent my going to a tea. My hostess held her tea out in her garden, and asked me to pour. It was very exclusive too, not a mob like you had at the golf links. The table was simply a

dream, decorated with the rarest gladioli. See, I've brought some of them home."

"Mary, were you really? In that dress? Did Mrs. W. J. Clarkson . . .?"

"And Mr. Graham Douglas was there," went on Mary, recklessly. "And he offered to take all the guests home in his car, but I drove home in the Petersons' carriage."

"The Petersons? Mary Erskine, are you telling the truth, or is it some more of your nonsense?"

But Mary ran away down cellar for the cream and would answer no more questions.

"She's makin' it all up as she goes along," declared Peter, who was making feeble efforts to set the table. "But, look here; the next time both you girls go off for the afternoon, one of you's got to stay at home. I was just startin' off for a paddle when Mr. Austin came in and he stayed about ten years."

"Oh, dear, how tiresome!" cried Helen. Mr. Austin was falling into the habit of coming to the manse, and Helen had long ago learned that he was not even within sight of the top rung of the social ladder.

"He sat there in the draw-bridge,"—Peter insisted upon giving this name to the parlour instead of the "drawing-room" which Helen so much desired—"he sat there as if he'd taken root, and he nearly burst a blood vessel trying to explain that he'd come to see

Uncle John, when I knew all the time he wanted to see you. But he wants somebody to help teach the Primary Class next Sunday."

"Oh, I'd love to," cried Mary, with suspicious haste. "Unless you want to, Helen."

But Helen was not at all anxious to do anything that might encourage Mr. Austin; he was quite too self-confident as it was.

Mary made the tea table lively by a truthful account of her afternoon tea, carefully omitting Graham Douglas's name. Dr. Sutherland laughed joyously, but Helen looked serious. She was beginning to be afraid that everyone in St. Stephen's would soon think Mary was queer. She was beginning to suspect it herself.

Mary went into the Primary Class room the next Sunday, trying to smother the feeling of relief that arose in her guilty soul at the sight of Mrs. Graydon's class filing patiently out of its room. In here there was no dulness. Some fifty little people, ranging in age from three to seven, occupied four rows of kindergarten chairs. Dr. Peterson's youngest daughter sat at the tiny organ and Miss Gertrude Graydon, in a new golden chiffon gown, was at the desk. She was not the regular teacher, having merely undertaken to substitute for a month. Miss Graydon belonged to the fashionable set of St. Stephen's and had no time for anything so unprofitable as teaching Sunday school.

"It was so good of you to come and help," she said, as Mary entered. She was rather disappointed that it was not Helen. She had not found Mary nearly so agreeable as her sister.

"Mother simply made me do this," she said, as if her presence needed some explanation, "and I'm not the least use at it. But I promised to look after things till Muriel McArthur comes back. I really don't see how she stands teaching every Sunday."

"I'm afraid I won't be much use either," said Mary. "I taught a Sunday school class at home, but they were much older than these."

"Oh, you'll do beautifully, I'm sure," said Miss Graydon easily. "I can't take the lesson because I have to slip away early to-day. Kit Clarkson is expecting a party of friends. They are motoring up from Toronto, and she wants me to meet them. You won't mind, will you?"

Mary said she did not mind, though she felt rather afraid as she looked at the fifty little chairs, each with its squirming little bundle, and fifty pairs of bright eyes fixed enquiringly upon her. She sat down in a corner beside Lila Peterson. The young girl smiled a welcome.

"They're perfect terrors," was her encouraging remark.

Miss Graydon turned to the organist. "What do we do first, Lila?"

A forest of little hands sprang up instantly and a half-dozen little voices piped shrilly.

"Please, teacher, we sing a hymn first!"

"Oh, dear, I had forgotten. What would you like to sing, dears?" Up went the fifty hands again, and as many hymns were suggested. The teacher looked about her in bewilderment.

"What did we sing last Sunday, Lila?" she asked.

"'Dare to be a Daniel'," said the organist. "But we always sing that."

"Oh, well, we might as well sing it again. What number is it? Hush, hush, children," she added, tapping a little bell. "You'll have to lead, Miss Erskine. I can't sing a note."

Lila Peterson was just learning to play the organ, and had but one idea about hymns: that they must be very slow. By the time they had dragged through two long stanzas, Mary felt that it would be easier to dare to be a Daniel than to lead the Primary Class in singing about it.

Miss Graydon sank into her seat when it was over, and took up a large book. "Now, children, you must sit very still, while I mark the roll, or perhaps I'll miss some of you."

The marking of the roll took a long time. Miss Graydon did not know all the children, and her pupils, being keenly alive to her deficiencies, each undertook to see that his name was securely regis-

tered. So there was a great deal of confusion and running up to the desk and back.

They kept Mary busy too during the interval. She untied pennies from the tight corners of wet handkerchiefs, and then chased the same pennies as they rolled under far-off chairs. She settled two quarrels, one of which had come to tears, the other to blows, and hung up half a dozen hats and replaced a half dozen others that were already hung up, on their owners restless little heads. She hushed an epidemic of loud giggles in one corner and equally loud sobs in another, and in a dozen ways strove to stem the flood-tide of disorder that threatened to rise above their heads.

When the roll was finally marked, Miss Graydon stood up and delivered a lecture on the naughtiness of misbehaving in Sunday school. Everybody sat up straight and looked very solemn; and just when order had been completely restored the door opened and two late pupils entered. As they were always late, nobody made any comment. Indeed, Mary had sometimes seen the little Ellwoods straying down the hill towards Sunday school just as the other pupils were being dismissed. Even though they were the scandal of the town, and the cause of the pending "Go-by" which was hanging over their mother's head, they were a lovely little pair to look upon. The little girl was seven, slim and graceful, a beautiful fairy in a pink silk dress, tiny pink kid

slippers and a wide white hat. Her long dark curls framing an exquisite face, and her big soulful dark eyes made her a perfect picture of childish innocence. The little brother whom she held by the hand was even more angelic. He was dressed in white from the top of his sailor hat to the immaculate toe of his small canvas slipper. His eyes were a heavenly blue, his hair hung in golden curls about his shapely head. He was altogether so lovely that Mary could hardly keep from hugging him.

"Goodness," whispered Lila Peterson, "I was hoping she'd keep them home to-day. Now we're in for a time."

The melancholy prophecy began to be fulfilled almost immediately. Trouble began to brew in the corner where the two newcomers sat. Complaints arose from behind, before and beside them.

"Bobby Ellwood's pinchin' me," wailed the angel boy's next neighbour.

"Please, teacher, Betty's squashin' me," came in gasps from another victim, almost devoid of breath. A pink and white baby, who sat directly in front of the angel boy, suddenly curled up her rosebud mouth and tears brimmed over from her big blue eyes as she broke into a wail——

"Bobby tooked my cent."

No sooner had the distracted teacher dealt with one crime than another was perpetrated. Through all the accusations the little girl sat and stared at

the accusers with an air of mingled defiance and denial, while the boy looked up with an angelic innocence that staggered suspicion, even when the lost cent was located in his white pocket.

"Now Bobby and Betty," begged Miss Graydon, when the collection had been taken up with desperate effort on the part of Lila and Mary, "do try to be good. Now, children, what hymn shall we sing?" continued the teacher.

"If they belonged to anyone but Mrs. Dick Ellwood she'd shake them," said Lila with a giggle.

"The sailin' song!" answered a sturdy, round-headed little man who was walking leisurely up and down the aisle to help pass the heavy time away. The teacher put him rather emphatically into his seat.

"I don't know that one. Is it in the hymn-book?"

"Aw, I don't like that hymn, it's too stale," objected a blasé young person from the back row.

"Children," besought the teacher, "do be quiet. What hymn do they mean?" she asked, appealing to the young organist. Lila shook her head, but Miss Betty Ellwood arose from her seat to put her right.

"Please, Miss Graydon, it's 'When Mothers Went Sailing' he means," she said with a patronising air. "But Bobby and me don't like that hymn."

"I like to sing, 'Oh, you Kid!'" said the angel Bobby, his lovely eyes turned up appealingly. "They sing it at the show where Daddy takes us. 'I

love my wife, but oh, you kid!" he trilled in a silvery, bird-like treble.

"That ain't a Sunday song," said the small Round-head reprovingly. "Teacher, we've got a record at home on our gramophone——"

Miss Graydon rang her bell emphatically. "Lila, do get 'When Mothers of Salem'; that must be what they want," she begged desperately.

The Sailing Song was slower and more laborious than the last. Mary was exhausted when it was finished and the children's faces were agonised as they strained for the long, high notes. But through it all the little Ellwood boy sang like the very seraphim. Above all the discord of the dragging chorus, Mary could hear his clear, silvery notes, the words perfectly enunciated:

"When mothers went sailing, their children bother Jesus,
The sternisiples broke their back, and bad were their part;
But Jesus saw them very dead, and sweep and smile and
slide and sled,
Suffer little children to come unto Me."

The desperate effort of the hymn let off some of the children's superfluous energy, and there was a comparative lull when Mary stood up to tell her story. Miss Graydon, with obvious relief, gathered up her gloves and chiffon parasol and hurried away to her tea party. Mary looked around her in dismay. The noise began rising around her like a flood. "I'm going to tell you a story about how God made this

lovely world, children," she said, raising her voice to meet the swelling disorder. She stumbled on with a halting story of creation, but finding that no one was listening, she tried questioning them.

"Now, you tell me some of the beautiful things God made," she suggested. "Something you saw on your way to Sunday school."

"Please, the saw mill," piped up one bright youngster, naming the most conspicuous object that had arisen before his vision.

"God never made that mill," scoffed a small Clarkson. "My daddy and Mr. Douglas made it."

"I mean some pretty green things, children; green things that grow."

The answers came fast now. "Green grass" and "green trees" led on to the flowers and the birds and the squirrels and chipmunks. Everyone was becoming interested when the sweet voice of the boy seraph floated up.

"And God made green worms." Mary paused. "And green snakes, too," he added. He was looking up at her with steady, solemn eyes; eyes that seemed to contain a reproof for one so shallow as to overlook the discrepancies in an imperfect creation.

"And rattle-snakes, too," cried the angel sister, with enthusiasm. "Teacher, did God make rattle-snakes just to bite us?"

The teacher hastily changed the subject, but there was no escape. When persecuted in one city she fled

to another only to be pursued by the relentless sceptics. They had arrived at the consideration of God's care for His creation when the golden voice of the golden-haired seraph arose again.

"Teacher, God watches us all the time, doesn't He?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Mary, much encouraged.

"I know, 'cause He was watching me one day when I was out playing and it was awful windy, and He threw a stick at me. But He didn't hit me though," he added triumphantly.

"I guess He can't throw straight," said Miss Betty. She was growing tired of the discussion. "Teacher, what's your name? Are you Dr. Sutherland's mother?"

Mary struggled with their heathen conception of the deity in vain. Caliban held no more grotesque theory of his Setebos than these children did of their heavenly Father.

Her head ached. She was overcome with the heat and the noise. The little room was poorly ventilated, the air was stifling. She was relieved when a little bell from the main room announced that the ordeal was over. There was another hymn to be sung. It was the last Sunday in August, but, for some strange reason, the little Ellwoods insisted upon a Christmas hymn, and Mary was too exhausted to resist. The young organist did not seem to see any incongruity in the choice, but laboured

faithfully through it, the children dragging after her:—

“Once in royal David’s city,
Stood a lowly cattle-shed,”

While, clear and sweet, above all the clamour of voices, like an angel’s obligato floated the voice of the seraph:—

“Once in oil was David sitting.”

CHAPTER XIII

“AND YE GAVE ME NO DRINK”

THE summer vacation was over; Peter started to the High School that topped one of the highest hills of the town and Bertha Evans resumed her classes. Visitors packed their trunks and returned to the hot city, campers folded their tents, families closed their cottages and came home from the lake shore, and the little town settled down to its regular work-a-day life, regulated by the school bell, the mill whistle, and the big gong in the fire hall tower, which rang three times a day regardless of the fact that it was always three o'clock.

With the end of the holiday season St. Stephen's resumed its activities. Since the day of the great bazaar the young ladies had been resting persistently and strenuously. Enthusiasm for the bells had waned in the hot weather, but Graham Douglas revived it by a very generous offer. Miss Katherine Clarkson reported it at their opening meeting.

“Graham and I were out on the lake the other evening,” she said, with a proprietary air that was not lost on the other members, “and I was saying that these wretched bells would toll for my funeral

the day they were hung, and he made me an offer——”

“An offer! Good gracious, Kit, have you landed him at last?” interrupted one of her cousins.

“Don’t be more of an idiot than you can possibly help, Majorie Clarkson,—an offer for the bells—for our Club.”

“Oh, dear, I thought he was going to suggest that they’d ring for a wedding instead of a funeral. How disappointing!” sighed another.

Miss Clarkson did not look in the least disturbed. “If these girls didn’t get so frightfully excited every time Graham’s name is mentioned,” she said, turning to the president, “I might get on with my story. What I’m trying hard to tell is that he has offered to double all the money we make for the bell fund before Christmas; so I move that we get to work and fairly bankrupt him.”

The news was received with joyous acclaim; and the fall campaign, opening under such favourable auspices, went off with great vigour. The Women’s Association under Mrs. W. J. Clarkson was left far in the shades of discouragement. The young ladies launched out into a sea of teas and bazaars and sales and concerts that engulfed all the energies of the congregation.

These were bad days for Mr. McWhirter. Never in all his well regulated life had he stooped to the use of profanity; not even when the Women’s In-

stitute of Northern Ontario held a three-day convention in St. Stephen's; but at the end of the third sale of home-cooking in the Sunday School room he came very near it.

"Tod!" he stormed, as the dust and crumbs and paper flowers fled before his advancing broom. "The Lord Almighty take peety on the kirk that's cursed wi' a horde o' idle weemin'! Sic a like racin' an' rummagin' an' clashin' an' clackin'! Ah, ye kine o' Bashan!"

Dr. Sutherland was passing into the vestry and paused. Mr. McWhirter met him as a fellow-sufferer.

"Eh, well, Doctor," he said, lowering his broom and his voice, "this is jist a great tribulation to ye. I wonder that ye bear up under it."

"Oh, come, come, Andrew," said the minister, soothingly, "you mustn't be so hard. This railing at the good women of our church is really getting to be a habit with you."

Andrew looked at him from under the lowering bushes of his brows. "A hawbit ye call it, eh?" he asked. "A hawbit? It's no a hawbit, Ah tell ye, it's a *gift*!" And he turned his back and resumed his sweeping with something of the air of the soldier who, when Napoleon said, "You're wounded," answered with hurt pride, "Nay, I'm killed, sire."

Helen was conspicuous in all these activities but Mary's efforts were feeble. She tried to give her

energies to the regular work of the church. Her first experience in the Primary Class would have driven her back to the drowsy shades of Mrs. Graydon's class but for the fact that among the little folk there was excitement at least.

Fortunately Miss Graydon did not remain long over the children. She had too many social engagements to attend to Sunday school regularly, and when Muriel McArthur returned, dropped out altogether. Miss McArthur was a quiet painstaking girl, as slow as she was conscientious, and seeing how entirely inadequate she was for the strenuous task that had fallen to her, Mary remained on as her assistant, feeling that even her 'prentice hand might be of some help.

But the little Ellwoods were so very naughty, and Lila's music was so slow and Muriel so much slower, and each Sunday's session such a hopeless travesty on Sunday school that Mary strove valiantly to find some worthy substitute for her unworthy self on Sunday afternoons. She broached the subject shyly one afternoon to young Mrs. Jack Clarkson, sister-in-law to the Costly Clarksons, who was quite as costly and fashionable as the rest of the family.

Mrs. Jack had been an excellent kindergarten teacher before her marriage; she was young and bright and clever, the very antithesis of Muriel, and Mary had long coveted her for the Primary Class.

They were sitting on the Costly Clarksons' ver-

anda after a game of tennis when the conversation drifted to church affairs and gave Mary the opportunity she wanted.

"That was a wonderful sermon Dr. Sutherland gave us last Sunday morning," Mrs. Clarkson, Senior, remarked, in her gentle worried voice. "It made me think how very little use we seem to be in the world. I have been hoping the young people would profit by it."

"Dr. Sutherland is always wonderful," young Mrs. Jack said, sipping her lemonade daintily. "Jack always says that he never hears a sermon in Toronto that can come up to his."

Mary was not so elated by these praises as she would have been earlier. She was accustomed to the people of her uncle's congregation expressing the most flattering admiration for his preaching, and at the same time going exactly contrary to it. But here surely was an opportunity to rescue the Primary Class.

"Mrs. Clarkson," she said timidly, turning to the younger woman, "do you think,—would it be possible for you to help with the Primary Class? Muriel McArthur and I have charge of it and she doesn't know much about teaching small children and I'm no use at all."

"That's a great idea, Mary," cried Miss Katherine Clarkson enthusiastically, "Bab never does a hand's turn round the church."

"Indeed it would be so nice, Barbara," her mother-in-law added. "Dear Dr. Sutherland would be so pleased."

"Why, I'd love to, more than anything," answered the young woman with a rather hard glance towards her sister-in-law, "though I don't see that you girls have set me such a wonderful example in Church work, Kit; but you know, Mother Clarkson, Jack wouldn't listen to such a thing. He'd take a fit if I left him Sunday afternoons. Besides, I think that home comes first with a married woman. It's entirely different with you bachelor girls who haven't a husband to look after."

As the two elder Miss Clarksons had for some time past been quite mature enough to undertake the care of a husband the conversation was becoming rather difficult.

Helen tactfully changed the subject, and as Mary had not courage enough to resume it the matter was dropped.

She was equally unsuccessful in other attempts. Everyone was too busy or too much tied with duties at home. All the young matrons suddenly were seized with the importance of the old truth that a woman's place is the home when approached on the subject of church work. And Mrs. Ellwood, who, everyone knew, left her children all day to the doubtful care of a servant-girl, was moved to ex-

press her opinion that she should not even be expected to go to church regularly.

"A mother of little ones is so tied," she said sweetly. "Her place is in the home."

Indeed no one seemed willing to undertake any work that would be a tie. And yet St. Stephen's was full of talented people. Mary took stock of its ability sometimes, sitting in church and glancing around at the well filled pews. There were at least half-a-dozen men who could take the Sunday school out of young Mr. Austin's incompetent hands and make it a success. Chief among them was Mr. Howard, the principal of the High School, whose praises Peter sang. Then there was Mr. W. J. Clarkson, who was a college graduate, and Graham Douglas, himself, with his genius for organisation. The choir was badly conducted and the organ was badly played. Everybody talked about it, but nobody did anything to better it; though there in her pew sat Mrs. Harold Clarkson who had been a successful choir leader before her marriage. Several of the young ladies of the congregation went down to Toronto weekly for vocal lessons, and sang at public concerts, but they never contributed anything to the service of praise. There were dozens of bright, capable girls and clever women, and yet the missionary societies were languishing for want of officers.

"I hope I'm not getting to be an old Pharisee,"

said Mary, anxiously, coming home from a discouraging canvass with Bertha for members for the Alice Grey Mission Circle. "If I don't take care, I'll be returning thanks that I'm not as other church members are."

"What's the matter now?" asked Peter, who was seated at his lessons, but keeping one ear open for conversation.

"I don't know," said Mary. "I wonder what is the matter, Helen? Uncle John works so hard, and everybody seems so fond of him, and so nice and kind; and yet nobody wants to do anything. The girls simply won't join the Circle. And if they join they won't promise to come."

Helen was not so inclined to worry over church affairs. "I think that if we knew other churches, we'd find they are nearly all like this one, Mary," she said comfortingly. "You know we were never anywhere beyond Mayfair Valley and the church was everything there. We all went to the meetings, but Mrs. Boyd often said it was because there wasn't anything else to go to. But here there is so much. There's the Country Club and a dozen other clubs, and parties all the time; and after all, everyone of the girls in the best set is working hard for the bells."

"Oh, hang the bells," cried Mary crossly, and then laughed at herself.

"Well, that's what they're goin' to do with them

when they're bought," said Peter. "Say, stop your jawin', you two, and see if I can stagger through this proposition."

Mary was not given to brooding over troubles. Life persisted in being joyous in spite of the ignorance of Sawdust Alley and the indifference of St. Stephen's. The world was full of a number of things to make one happy as a king; chiefly fairy groves where, any day, one might find a birch bark note blooming on a tree.

Nevertheless, Sawdust Alley was quite as persistent in being full of woes. The chief one at present was the fact that Lancelot was not attending school. Sammy had to be cared for, and he clung to his big brother like a persistent little leach.

Mary suggested that Mrs. McCann take Sammy with her to her work; but it was soon found that Monday, the day she worked at the manse, was the only day the plan was possible. On Tuesdays she went to the Ellwoods, having decided to postpone the execution of the fatal "go-by" in consideration of higher pay. But Mrs. McCann knew better than to risk Sammy's precious life with the angel children of the house of Ellwood; and Mary, who struggled with them every Sunday, was compelled to admit that the danger was too great. Wednesday saw Mrs. McCann at Mrs. Harding's beautiful home, and Mary well knew that lady would have taken a relapse had anyone suggested bringing a noisy, dirty

little rascal like Sammy into her immaculate kitchen. Thursday was Mrs. Kirkwall's day. She couldn't consider the proposal for a moment, she said, when Mary timidly suggested it at a meeting in the church. Not that she would mind the child herself, she declared; but the maids would leave, she knew they would; you really couldn't do anything you wanted when you kept two maids. Friday belonged to the Costly Clarksons. Mrs. Clarkson was a small, subdued, worried-looking woman, who deferred to her daughters in everything. She promised to see about it if the girls didn't mind, and Mary heard no more about Sammy's fate from that quarter. There was only Saturday left, and Mrs. McCann kept it for extra work—having a waiting list of half-a-dozen housekeepers. But there was no school that day, anyway.

"I really don't know how we're going to get you to school, Lencie," Mary said, one warm September day when she found him playing with Sammy on the edge of the green ditch. Sawdust Alley seemed deserted, most of its population being off to school; only the babies were left, to roll around in the dirt and be screamed at by their mothers. Lancelot and his war chariot were not so conspicuous, either. Now that the boys of his own age were shut up in school the warrior had laid aside his armour.

"Don't you worry about me, Miss Erskine," he said, stroking Mary's white dress with a very black

little hand. "I don't mind 'bout havin' to stay home." He did not like to see her troubled, though he could not help feeling that she was making a great fuss over a very small matter.

Mary carefully spread a newspaper on the front steps and sat down to consider the matter. Sammy scrambled into her lap, and Lancelot seated himself in the sawdust at her feet.

"Tell us a story," he coaxed, "the one you told last time, 'bout the guy that worked in the kitchen."

So Mary told again the story of Gareth, the gallant youth who did his menial task so bravely, and so grew into a noble knight. "That's what you're going to be some day, Lance," she said. "You must be my brave knight, Sir Lancelot."

The babies had been gathering nearer, and so Mary told stories suited to the four and five-year-olds, while Sammy rolled around in the sawdust. There was the story of Red Riding Hood, the Three Bears, and a dozen lilting, alluring rhymes from Mother Goose. Behind them the mills buzzed and blared; in front the trains rumbled and shrieked; wagons rattled to and fro; men from the mills passed up and down; from next door, Mrs. Moore's boarding-house, came sounds of hurrying feet, clattering dishes, and screamed orders from the kitchen. But the charmed little circle about Mary sat and stared into her face oblivious of its surroundings. They were far away from Sawdust Alley, sailing a fairy

shallop down magic streams, dancing up the "broad-based flights of marble stairs" that led to the palace with its "four-score windows all alight."

And right there, in the noise and dust, Mary's Great Idea came. It did not spring into being at once, the thought that she might have an afternoon play-school here for the little ones, with special lessons for Lancelot. It came like a shy flower in springtime, first the tiny shoot, then the little plant, and at last the brave blossom.

She showed it to her uncle the next day as they walked to the post-office. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the girls of the church could get up a kindergarten down on the Mill Flats? Mrs. McCann would lend her house, it was always empty anyway, now that Geraldine and Gwennie and Annabel were in school. Just think of what a relief it would be to poor Mrs. Jones! She was getting too sick now to care for her children. And there were the little Carters who ran all over the mill yard, and who, the men said, would surely be killed if they weren't watched.

In her enthusiasm Mary talked as fast and as fluently as Mrs. McCann herself. As she had hoped, Dr. Sutherland was full of sympathy. It was a blessed idea, and if it could be worked out would be the best thing the girls had ever done.

"I have only one objection, Mary, child. It will tie you greatly, and you have so much to do about the house, and it's not very healthful down there on

the Flats. Suppose you caught something, dear, what would Aunt Effie say to me for not taking better care of you?"

Mary scoffed at the idea. "I've never had anything wrong with me since Pete and I had whooping cough," she said gaily. "Oh, I'm just crazy to begin. Maybe there'll be a mothers' class some day, and we can show them how to be clean and take care of their children. Bertha'll help when school's out. I wish Bertha didn't have to earn her own living. Oh, dear, why don't people who haven't anything to do see all the jobs lying about them just coaxing to be done? Oh, Uncle John, I wish I could marry an awfully rich man, a billionaire, if there is such a thing, and I'd have a perfectly gorgeous time with his money. I'd——"

"What a wicked and worldly young person! The billionaires of the town will have to be warned against your wiles."

"Don't interrupt; the end justifies the means. I wouldn't wait to go on a wedding trip, even; I'd rush down town with my veil on and buy a wagon load of soap and cleaning powder, and a barrel of sweet-pea seed, and I'd drive all up and down Sawdust Alley distributing them. And I'd offer a prize for cleanliness. I'd offer a pink satin dress and a rose-shaded floor lamp, and a velvet parlour rug and a brocaded Chesterfield—oh, yes, and a gramophone full of Harry Lauder records to the woman that had

the cleanest and prettiest house by the time my anniversary came round! And by that time I do believe they'd be cured of their dirt and find out how much nicer it is to be clean."

"Well, well, well," cried Dr. Sutherland, breathless from the gale. "You would still have the billionaire to reckon with."

"Oh, I could put up with him if I only knew that Mrs. Jones and the Carter youngsters and Lance had all the soap and water they need. Uncle John, don't you think that it's terribly wrong that there is no water down there? None to drink or wash in, I mean. There's an abundance lying in the ditches and cellars. Bertha's father says that Mr. Douglas and Mr. Clarkson won't let them put that area inside the town limits, because it would raise their taxes, and so there are no water works. Is that really true?"

Her heart rebuked her as she looked up at him. Dr. Sutherland's face wore the pained look that always came to it when anything was said against a member of his church. Like an indulgent father, he could not see very clearly the faults of his children; and Graham Douglas was the son of his old friend.

"I wouldn't be too sure that that is the reason, dear," he said gently. "I don't think it would be fair to hold Graham responsible. He has always been so generous to any charitable work for his people. I shouldn't like him to think,"—he hesi-

tated and glanced at her with apology in his kindly eyes. "I should be sorry, dear, if anything spoken against Graham should come from our family. Remarks are so apt to be repeated, you know. And it would be unfair to blame him for all the troubles of the people who work for him."

Mary felt the rebuke, though it was given with more than her uncle's usual gentleness. She began to recall remorsefully the many unkind remarks she had made about Graham Douglas. What if they should reach Mrs. Harding's ears and she should spread them through the congregation? She was walking along slowly, absorbed in her self-reproach, when Dr. Sutherland spoke; she looked up suddenly and found herself face to face with the object of her thoughts. Graham Douglas had just stepped out of his office and paused to speak to his pastor, with a rather frigid bow to his niece.

"I'm glad to see you home, Graham," Dr. Sutherland was saying. "I saw your launch speeding up the lake yesterday, and supposed you were off for a holiday."

"No such luck. I was only off for more work. W. J. and I took a run up to Murray Harbor to look at our camps. I wish you could have been with us; it was a glorious run." He glanced at Mary, and, eager to make amends, she spoke up with surprising cordiality.

"Oh, thank you, it would have been lovely."

"We have to go up again before long," he said eagerly. "Couldn't we make up a little picnic party?"

Mary glanced up at Dr. Sutherland. "What do you say, Uncle John?" she asked, her eyes adding plainly, "I'm behaving better, am I not?"

"This warm weather can't last long," Graham Douglas added, "so we ought to go soon. Suppose we say next Saturday, so that Peter can come too."

Mary was touched by his thought of Peter. He had really always shown himself kind and generous. Perhaps Uncle John was right and she had been severe and hasty in her judgment.

But when she had accepted the invitation she left her uncle and went down to Sawdust Alley. And there she met poor, half-witted Danny Greeves hobbling along the dusty road, carrying a pail of water all the way from Johnny Petatie's Bethlehem Well. A picture of the fountain that played all day in the centre of the lawn before Graham Douglas's handsome house rose before her.

"I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink," were the words that sounded above even the din of the mills.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SHINING TRAIL

TO Mary and Helen fell the honour of bidding the guests for the Saturday afternoon sail.

"You bring the crowd," Graham Douglas had said to Mary. "Twenty won't be too many, and my Aunt will look after everything else."

Helen was very much impressed by this favour. She was rather relieved to see that her sister did not seem to grasp the significance of their being able to ask a party aboard Mr. Douglas's launch. If Mary realised its import she might spoil everything by staying at home. As it was she began to make trouble from the first moment.

"I'm going to ask the whole Evans family," she announced as they sat down at Helen's desk, to make out the list of guests. "Just think what a treat it will be for Bertha's mother. She never goes anywhere."

"Oh, Mary, do you think you'd better, dear?" asked Helen alarmed. "You know, Mrs. Kirkwall will be the hostess; and we'll have to ask the Clarkson girls and Gertrude."

"Well, what of it? Mr. Douglas said the launch

would hold over twenty; and there'll be room, even if Mrs. Kirkwall does take up space enough for three."

"But, Mary, you know as well as I do that Bertha isn't in the Clarksons' set. And it wouldn't be nice of us to cause embarrassment by mixing people up that way."

"They mix in church. They're all members of St. Stephen's." Helen noticed that Mary's firm little chin was going up, always a bad sign.

"I know, dear, but social lines must be drawn. It just can't be otherwise; and Bertha is never invited to anything Mrs. Kirkwall gives."

"I know it," cried Mary resentfully, "and for that reason, as Miss Squeers said, 'I pities and despises' Mrs. Kirkwall and all her set. Bertha Evans is a lady and her father is a saint. And if he doesn't wear a necktie he wears a halo if people would only look at him and see it. And her mother is an old aristocrat. She's descended straight from the royal line of Stuarts, and she might have been a Duchess. And the Clarkson girls aren't clever enough to even talk to Bertha. They bore her to death; I know they do, though she's too nice to say so."

"She wouldn't enjoy herself at the picnic, then," said Helen feebly.

Mary's chin went even higher, her coppery hair seemed to glow.

"Well, if we don't ask Bertha, I shan't go my-

self. I don't really want to go anyway. I only promised to please Uncle John."

Helen knew from long experience that Mary would have her way. There was no use appealing to her uncle. He would not have understood the situation, and it was not at all likely that anyone could explain it to him. His people of Stephen's were his family, brothers and sisters all, and Helen realised that he probably did not know that there were such things as "sets." But it was very humiliating. Just when this great good fortune was come to them Mary was going to make a dreadful social blunder. She yielded with what grace she could summon when Mary suggested several other girls of the Alice Grey Mission Circle who were also quite beyond the pale, but she rebelled utterly when Mr. Austin's name was included in the list.

"Oh, Mary, dear!" she cried on the verge of tears. "You'll spoil everything for me if you invite that man. Why he's a clerk in Barnes and Henderson's!"

"But he's Superintendent of the Sunday School!" cried Mary. "And I'm sure Uncle John would think we ought to ask him."

"I'm sure Uncle Sutherland doesn't expect us to invite all the session and managers," retorted Helen with as near an approach to temper as she ever permitted herself.

Mary saw she was really disturbed, and substituted for the objectionable name that of Mr. Rich-

mond Harding, the only son of his mother whose father was a wealthy banker, and quite the most fashionable young man in the town.

"Gertrude Graydon will be happy if he's invited. but don't let him speak to me," Mary warned. "He's so silly I can't endure him. 'Haw—Bah Jove, donch'know, Miss Erskine. Haw! that hat of yours is simply topping. I'm frightfully fed up on the hats the girls are wearing, donch'know, positively peeved, but yours, now—why, it's absolutely topping.' "

She imitated the young man with such perfection that Helen was forced to laugh, and peace was restored.

The rest of the list was made out without dispute. The Petersons were above question. They did not figure at all in Wawashene society, as Mrs. Peterson was too busy with good deeds both at home and abroad to play bridge. She also carefully kept her daughters away from the doings of the "Best People," and Dr. Peterson was known to have very old-fashioned ideas about what girls should do and where they should go. But there could be no doubt about their eligibility. The Petersons were known to be quite able to emerge from the social obscurity if they so desired.

Helen's list included Gertrude Graydon and her mother, several of the Clarkson girls, and Mrs. W. J. Clarkson, also two or three young men from

the bank, without whom the Costly Clarksons would be sure to discover that they had another engagement.

Peter's list had already been filled up with Billy Coles. He was nobody in particular, but he belonged to Dr. Peterson's Sunday school class and Peter loved him as Jonathan loved David.

Mary yawned aloud and stretched her arms above her head when the arduous task was at last finished.

"Heigh Ho! We did things up far easier in Mayfair Valley. When Aunt Effie gave a party she just went to Prayer Meeting and invited everybody. And don't you remember when Dr. and Mrs. Boyd had their silver wedding? Pete started at one end of the village and I started at the other and gave everybody a 'bid.' And we met in the middle and gave old Granny Foster two invitations, and she came twice, in the morning and evening both. And we were awfully glad, too, because she helped peel the potatoes for the salad."

"It's impossible to know everyone in a large town though," reasoned Helen. "You must leave someone out."

"Well," declared Mary scanning the list again. "This suits me quite well except for one name. I think I would have a lovely time if we could leave him out." She looked at her sister enquiringly.

"Whose?" asked Helen anxiously, fearing for Mrs. Harding's son.

"Mr. Douglas's."

It was impossible for even Helen to keep from laughing at this absurdity.

"Society is just like the Grand old Duke of York," cried Mary. She ran to the piano and sitting down sang the gay ditty of their childhood games, to a very loud and elaborate accompaniment.

"Oh, the grand old Duke of York,
He had three thousand men,
He marched them up to the top of the hill,
And he marched them down again.
And when they were up they were up,
And when they were down they were down
And when they were only half way up
They were neither up nor down!"

When the Evans family moved in from the country they brought as much of the farm with them as they could possibly accommodate. They lived in a semi-agricultural fashion, had a large garden, raised chickens and ducks, and even managed to keep a cow and a horse. They had brought to their town home, too, much of the old home furnishings. Bertha's taste prevailed in the front room where she had her piano and her books, a few pieces of comfortable simple furniture and some good pictures. In the other rooms her mother had been allowed full sway. The dining-room was crowded with the old chairs and sofas from the farm, the walls covered with photographs of all the family relatives mingled with hair wreaths, mottoes worked in wool, and some

bright chromos, chief among them a picture of Queen Victoria in her Jubilee regalia.

Mary loved every corner of the funny old house from Bertha's pretty room to the back shed where the old cream separator stood. She ran up the garden walk with her invitation to the picnie and found Bertha seated on the veranda immersed in a pile of French exercises. Out in the back garden her father and mother were moving about garnering their apple harvest.

"How lovely of you to come and reseue me from this deluge of examination papers," cried Bertha, jumping from her chair, in the quick bird-like way that was one of her charms. "I'm afraid I'm getting to be a perfectly abandoned old school-teacher. Don't you teach music so long that it becomes chronic."

"No danger, the public will look after that. I've no gifts in that direction. But you do work too hard, Bertha. Helen was never like you. When school was over she was done with it for the day. You're always at it. Anybody would think you were married to Wawashene High School."

Bertha arranged the cushions on the old sofa. "There, make yourself cosy," she said. "It's quite correct, because that's the only sort of marriage I'll ever make."

"Why?" asked Mary, looking up in alarm. She had the girl's ideal of marriage, a shining goal, very

far away, to be sure, but always there to cast a glamour over the road of life. "Oh, don't, Bertha!"

"Yes, I settled that with myself years ago. Now, what delightful summer breeze blew you down here this evening?"

Mary wanted to continue the subject but a look in her friend's face told her it would not be welcome; she stated her errand.

"Mr. Douglas said we were to ask anyone we wanted, and of course I want you more than anybody else."

She was surprised by the sudden expression of dismay on her friend's face. Her eyes dropped to the papers on the table.

"Oh, thank you, Mary, but I couldn't. It would be quite impossible. You don't know what a mistake you are making. Mr. Douglas would not ask me himself."

Mary looked at her in surprise and not a little disappointment. Bertha had always shown a spirit of nobility, so far above the petty slights given her by St. Stephen's fashionable set that it seemed impossible she should resent any neglect.

"Now, I know what you are thinking," Bertha said with a smile in her beautiful brown eyes, "but that isn't the reason at all. I don't mind in the least that I'm not on his aunt's calling list. It's something quite different, Mary, dear. I'm sorry, but——Mr. Douglas doesn't like me. It happened

long ago. We haven't been on friendly terms for a long time."

"Well, I don't care. It will be a good chance to make up. It will be lovely of you to show how magnanimous you are. And your father and mother must come too."

Bertha laughed. "You couldn't coax mother aboard anything that rides the water, not if you gave her the town. She a hopeless landsman. And of course father wouldn't go without her. No, dear, just take your party and have a good time, and you and I will go for a paddle some day all by ourselves."

"Oh, I'm dreadfully disappointed," mourned Mary. "You can't feel any worse about Mr. Douglas than I do. I feel like a great hypocrite, sailing in his launch, when I hate him!"

Mary was surprised at the sudden flash of something that looked like relief in her friend's eyes.

"Oh, Mary Erskine! And anybody can see that he is very much attracted by you."

"No, he is not!" cried Mary flushing hotly. "Don't you say that or I shan't go. I know it's horrible of me to talk about him this way, but I can't like a man who lets the people who work for him live in a mud puddle while he lives in a palace, so now."

To Mary's surprise Bertha came to his defence. "It isn't because he is cruel or unkind. He is just

immersed in business and forgets. But unless something stops him in his money getting he will become cruel. But you could, Mary."

Mary jumped to her feet. "Such nonsense. He wouldn't pay the smallest attention to anything I said. But you really are an angel, Bertha Evans, even if you won't come to his party. But, oh, don't you think you could make a special effort and be an archangel and come?"

But Bertha was gently inexorable, and Helen had some difficulty in hiding her satisfaction when Mary came home with the news that the Evanses would not be able to go.

Everyone else fortunate enough to be invited accepted, however. An invitation to sail on Graham Douglas's launch was not likely to be refused.

Although Wawashene had a whole blue, island-dotted lake and a winding brown river to itself for a playground, boating was not very fashionable as a pastime. During the past two summers the gasoline launch and the canoe had been superseded by the motor car. The roads around the town were rough and hilly and intolerably stony, yet car-loads of young people could always be seen bumping joyously over them. With the golden autumn days motor picnics came into high favour. To go flying over the country in the blinding dust, as though each car held a desperate fugitive from justice; to snatch a lunch at a hotel in a neighbouring town, and come

whirling home in the evening, leaping and tossing over the stones, was considered the very ecstasy of enjoyment.

Graham Douglas did not often accept invitations to join the fashionable sport. He had very little time for recreation, and when he left his work he preferred his beautiful white-and-silver launch and the long blue-and-silver lanes that wound in and out among the islands. And whenever he chose to go sailing he could be quite sure that those whom he invited would forsake the dusty highway.

So everybody came on Saturday. When the manse party arrived at the wharf Mary was delighted to see all the Peterson family there, even to the busy Doctor. The Clarkson girls and Gertrude Graydon were already on board, dressed in the latest thing in yachting costumes. Mary slipped her arm into Dorothy Peterson's and followed her to another part of the boat. She always felt shabby and ill at ease in the presence of the sophisticated and fashionable young ladies, and had never a remark to make in their presence. The conversation was always about bridge or the latest doings at Rideau Hall, and Mary had no ideas upon either subject.

Mrs. Kirkwall, Graham Douglas's aunt, was a large, genial lady. Everything about her seemed in proportion to her size. Her laugh was big and jolly, her generosity of the same bulk, and her irresponsi-

bility the largest thing of all. She was the only sister of Graham's mother, and when her husband died, she came to Wawashene to make a home for her rich nephew. It was a perfect fairy-tale ending to all her troubles, and she would have enjoyed it to the full if people had let her. But Mrs. Kirkwall had no idea how to steer her course through the difficult social waters with so important a person as her nephew on board. Everyone in the town imposed on her, from her maids and Mrs. McCann to the Women's Association of St. Stephen's Church. Every organisation that needed money or a president made her supply both. The Women's Canadian Club, the Daughters of the Empire, the Women's Institute, the Mothers' Clubs—everything in church and state clamoured for her. And the poor beleaguered lady spent her days hurrying from meeting to meeting, accomplishing nothing. She was seated now in one of the luxurious deck chairs, lavishly dressed and hospitably glad to see everyone.

"This is the day of the annual meeting of the Historical Society," she announced radiantly, "and I'm President; and look at me here!"

Graham Douglas, in a trim yachting suit, handed his guests on board, and with effusive assistance from Peter and Billy, he started his engine and they sped away up the shore. The lake lay smooth as glass in the morning calm, veiled in the soft haze of September. The *Shagata* spun over the silvery floor

with a soft purring sound; along the shore where the farms lay spread out, fresh and dewy, in their harvest dress of cloth of gold; up to where the fields ceased and the throb of the engine echoed in the silent woods, and the swell from their bows washed the tree trunks. Mary nestled into a corner behind her uncle with Dorothy Peterson beside her. Helen joined a group with their host and Katherine Clarkson as the centre, not before she had made several futile efforts to bring Mary out of her corner. She had taken great pains with Mary's toilette that morning and was proudly aware that she was looking her very best in her blue and white linen, with her bronze curls tossing in the breeze. For Helen's worldly-wisdom had made her aware of the potent fact that Graham Douglas seemed interested in Mary; a fact that was prophetic of more glorious things than her rosiest dreams had pictured.

"So you've got a grand scheme in that pretty red head of yours for making over Sawdust Alley, Miss Mary?" asked Dr. Peterson, twisting round in his chair to listen to the girls' talk.

"Mary and Bertha Evans are going to make the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose," said Dr. Sutherland, regarding her with shining eyes. "Tell us all about it, Mary."

But there were too many people listening for Mary to talk, so Mrs. Peterson told of the scheme for

a kindergarten, provided there were enough young women in St. Stephen's to give their time to it.

"It would be dear old Johnny Hill's dream come true," said Mrs. Graydon softly. "He always hoped his Sunday School would grow into a daily one, but he has never been able to get the help. Young people seem to be so busy these days," she added, glancing wistfully towards her daughter.

"Oh, I think the girls will get plenty of them to join in this work," said Dr. Sutherland, with his usual cheerfulness. "St. Stephen's never fails before a clear call for help."

"Indeed, that's quite true, Doctor," cried Mrs. W. J. Clarkson, who was knitting furiously at a silk scarf, never so much as glancing up at the lovely scenery. "I, for one, think our church has done more than its duty towards those people. Wait till you're here at Christmas time, Miss Erskine. Why, the baskets we send down there would feed a regiment."

"Yes, and pauperise one, too," growled Dr. Peterson. "Fortunately, that's not the sort of work these girls are planning."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that," cried Mrs. Kirkwall, agreeably. "The more you give those people the more they have to spend on trash—anything but soap."

"You won't be so enthusiastic after you have worked among them as long as mother has, Mary," said Miss Gertrude Graydon, who had been listen-

ing idly, Mr. Richmond Harding having forsaken her for Helen Erskine. "Those Carter children are better dressed than we were when we were little, and Mrs. Dick Ellwood told me yesterday that Mrs. McCann lets her children have far more money for candy and the picture shows than she does."

"Mrs. Dick Ellwood is an authority on how to bring up children," said Mrs. Kirkwall, and everybody laughed. "But Graham says anybody down there that works for him gets wages enough and doesn't need charity. Peter, tell Mr. Douglas it's time we had some ginger ale."

As the glasses were passed, someone remembered how, when Mrs. Carter was sick, she had seven cases of ginger ale sent her from St. Stephen's people.

That reminded everyone of how the Joneses had five turkeys given them one Christmas and pretended they had none, and Mrs. Kirkwall related how she had once given five dollars to the Quinsys to buy coal, and they all went and had their picture taken.

One good story followed another, causing great hilarity; and discouragement settled down upon Mary like a pall. Her uncle and Dr. Peterson had moved up to the bow and she arose and followed them.

"Come and take a turn at the wheel, Miss Mary," called Graham Douglas. "Did you ever try to steer a launch?"

No, Mary never had. She approached shyly to

the place just vacated by Miss Clarkson. She had never yet felt free in Graham's presence. But she found it very exhilarating to stand at the wheel in the breeze and feel the boat respond to her touch. Her host stood at her side and pointed out the objects to steer by. She must hold the *Shagata's* head straight for that white sandy point on that island. Now she must veer a little to starboard and point for that pine tree on the bluff. There was a sandy bar across the channel here, and she must turn and run straight for that red barn far away on the hill top.

Mary grew absorbed in the joy of it. The lake was growing narrow and there were rocks to be watched for. As her host stood at her side giving instructions he told her some of the Indian lore of the place, tales his father used to tell him when he was a little fellow. It was an old Indian, living up at the head of the lake, that had named his launch the *Shagata*. It was an Algonquin word meaning a gleam of sunlight on the water.

"Straight ahead down that channel now," he said, nodding to a far-off gap between two islands shrouded in a soft haze. As Mary went straight for it she noticed a black speck far down the dazzling track. It gradually grew into a canoe and she could catch the silver flash of its paddle.

"What do you do when you meet anyone?" she asked. "Do you honk your horn or just run over them?"

"Whichever you like," he cried gaily. He touched the wheel and sent the launch a little to the right.

"What would you advise, doctor?" he asked, turning to Dr. Peterson with twinkling eyes. "I haven't found my horn of much use on land."

"Run over 'em, then, by all means. You tried to finish me that way not many days since, when I had a beautiful young lady out for a drive."

"He was more fortunate than I was," said Graham Douglas, looking down at Mary; but she was spared the embarrassment of a reply. All her attention was concentrated on the approaching canoe. There was something in the swing of that paddle that set her heart beating faster. This lovely, forest-girt water was surely just the place where the Hunter of the Lake might be found! It seemed perfectly natural that he should be paddling through this glorious wilderness, returning from that far-off region whither he had gone. Where was it he had said?—"Beyond the baths of northern stars."

And then the next moment the launch was alongside, and there he was! His shirt sleeves were rolled up, showing his lean, brown arms; his dark hair hung over his forehead from underneath his slouch hat. Someone waved a handkerchief, and he raised his paddle in answering salute. Mary caught the gleam of that kindly smile she had never forgotten, and the next moment the *Shagata* had swerved wildly from her course, and was running straight for the

rocks. Graham Douglas caught the wheel and swiftly brought the boat round to the channel, not before an expression of annoyance had burst from his lips.

Everyone uttered a remonstrance of one sort or another, Peter's being the strongest.

"Hi, there, Molly," he cried. "What you doin'? Were you goin' to make us climb a tree?"

But Mary was not in the least ashamed of her mistake. She laughed. "Oh, I'm no use," she cried, throwing up her hands, and leaving the wheel. "I hope I didn't do any damage," she cried gaily, as she slipped back into her seat.

"Dorothy, did you know who that was?" she whispered, nodding towards the voyageur disappearing into the silver mists. The girl looked down the shining track. "No, I didn't notice, I was too much interested in your attempt to upset us all. See how he rides the swell from our boat."

Mary leaned over the railing and watched him disappear down the radiant lane between the green islands. A few lines from the little book that had so helped their brief acquaintance came to her—Roberts' beautiful poem:

"And Klote Scarp sailed and sang
Till the canoe grew little like a bird,
And black, and vanished in the shining trail."

"The shining trail!" That was always his road. It led him to the free open wilds, the untrodden for-

est path, the unexplored lake and stream. But it was surely leading him back home now, and her heart sang in time to his steady stroke. For every beat of his paddle was taking him nearer to the Ivory Palace where her message hung. And to-morrow—who knew what glorious thing might happen to-morrow?

She was so happy that she made herself the life of the party as they ate their lunch on the rocks at the head of the lake. Helen looked at her in growing pride and joy. At last Mary was going to behave properly; and if she did not, by some sudden freak, spoil everything, there was no doubt that there were great days ahead of her.

The sail home was the best of all to Mary. Miss Katherine Clarkson had endured enough of Graham's attention to the Erskine girls, and on the return voyage she took the wheel herself. So Mary was left in peace to sit with Dr. Peterson on one side and her uncle on the other and revel in the glory of the purple sunset and the magic of the amethyst mists that hung along the shore. And as the *Shagata* went spinning away down the golden floor of the lake towards the long shafts of light that stretched out from the town, her heart ran far ahead to the white pillared grove and the message she felt sure awaited her there.

CHAPTER XV

“AND THE HUNTER IS HOME”

ON Monday morning Mary went through her work with the speed of the wind. Sunday had intervened to prevent an earlier visit to the Ivory Palace, but this afternoon she had promised herself one. But she could not disappoint Lancelot and the babies in Sawdust Alley, not even for the joy of seeing some new fruit growing on the birch trees in her grove. So she was racing with the clock this morning to keep both engagements. She was gayer than usual, running up and down stairs with snatches of song, or dashing off jolly little airs on the piano. Her uncle in his study paused in his reading to listen with a smile to a merry rendering of a song. The absurd child was singing over and over a bit of Stevenson's *Requiem* as though it were something to dance to,—

“Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.”

Helen smiled too, very knowingly. She was sure she guessed the cause of Mary's high spirits and her own rose accordingly. Rosy dreams of future wealth

and power rose up before her. Helen was incapable of a jealous feeling towards her little sister; Mary's good fortune was hers. And what a wonderful fortune it was that seemed to be in store for little Molly,—that mansion up at the head of the Avenue, wealth and position! Helen watched her running gaily about the house with a feeling almost akin to awe.

Mary dressed very carefully for her visit and set off as soon as Peter returned to school. It had rained in the night and Sawdust Alley was swimming in black water. As she picked her way carefully across the tracks she found Danny Greeves standing disconsolately in front of his house, holding a broken little geranium in its salmon can.

"I left it out on the windy all night, and it got drowned," he said, the tears filling his big vacant eyes.

"Oh, that's too bad, Danny." Mary took the little wreck in her hands tenderly. "Perhaps this slip will grow again. But wait till I tell you the good news. Mrs. Graydon's going to give me piles and piles of bulbs to plant this fall. Hyacinths, you know those lovely scented spikes; and tulips, great whopping big red ones; and ever so many other kinds. And if you'll get your wheelbarrow and bring down some earth from Mr. Hill's, we'll plant a gorgeous row right round your house, and they'll all come up in the spring!"

The pained wrinkles left Danny's narrow forehead, his vacant face beamed with childish laughter.

"A whole row! Growin' round the house," he chuckled. "Ho, ho! Round the house!"

"How's your mother to-day?" Mary asked, feeling that she had stirred up too much hilarity. Danny became solemn immediately. He shook his big head sadly. "It rained. Maw's always bad when it rains. Come on in and see her," he begged.

Mary's conscience smote her as she refused. "I can't to-day, Danny. I'm sorry. See, take her one of these peaches." She opened the little bag which she always carried with her to Sawdust Alley. "And here's one for you too. Are you sure she is well wrapped up in bed?"

"Yeh, sure." Danny was swallowing the peach, skin and all. "I put on a fire," he mumbled proudly. "Doc. Peterson told me. He said a fire would dry up the house, and then Maw would be better." He nodded towards the rows of lumber piles behind the house, and glanced at Mary cunningly.

"It would be grand if all them lumber piles was on fire," he declared. "Then she'd be all better, wouldn't she?"

Mary laughed. "Oh, my goodness, Danny, you'd have us all burned up;" and waving her hand at Mrs. Greeves' white face which appeared at the window, she hurried away.

She found Lancelot trying to force a late dinner

of cold porridge down Sammy's rebellious throat. The baby was flushed and cross, and was yelling his protests in a hoarse voice, and his little nurse looked tired and worried.

"Aw, whatter yeh yowlin' about?" he was enquiring in patient remonstrance, patting the baby rather violently on the back. He looked up in relief as Mary entered. "He's been hollerin' all day; an' all about nothin'," he complained miserably.

Mary unclasped the hot little hands from his brother's neck, and took the baby upon her knee. "Look, Sammy," she said. "See what I brought." She opened her bag and took out a peach. Sammy stopped crying and watched eagerly as she peeled it. She fed it to him in small bits, and Sammy sat up and ate with a relish, opening his rosy mouth like a baby robin.

Mary put him back into his carriage and looked him over anxiously. His black eyes were too bright, his rosy cheeks too rosy.

"I think he's caught a cold, Lance," she said. "I suppose the cellar is full of water again."

"You bet," cried the boy joyfully. "Gwennie was sailin' boats in it last night when Ma came home. An' she caught it, you bet. Wanta see it?"

"No, thank you. I think we'd better take Sammy up to Mrs. Hill. She'll tell us what to do for him, and we'll talk about your lessons on the way." Mary

made her decision with a great effort. No Ivory Palace to-day!

The babies were already gathering on the front steps for their story hour and she had some difficulty in getting away.

"We'll be back just in a little while, darlings," she said. "Take care, Marie Louise! Out of the road, Izzie boy. That's the man, Billy. No, no, dears, you mustn't come this time. We're going to get some medicine for Sammy from Mother Hill, and then we'll be right back and I'll tell you about the Three Bears."

She moved the carriage swiftly along the narrow plank walk. Lancelot, acting as a rear guard, remained behind to delay the pursuers till she was safely out into the country. All along the little street she was greeted joyfully from fly-specked windows or ash-strewn yards where the grey weekly washing was being hung out to get greyer in the smoky air.

The rain had settled the dust and out beyond the mills the country was sweet and fresh. The soft haze of September veiled the river and the fields. Away up the stream at the end of a wooded point a flaming maple held up an early banner of Autumn, the herald of the gorgeous train now on its way from the magic north.

Lancelot dashed ahead and back again like a playful puppy, all his troubles forgotten. He made a dozen excursions into the swampy reeds and rushes,

sending the swallows and the "soldier-birds" up into the air in startled clouds, and returned with all sorts of treasures: now an armful of bulrushes, again a big pitcher-plant filled with water, and even a paddling little mud-turtle that made Sammy shout with joy and forget his headache altogether.

As they trundled on, the little black curly head fell back upon the pillow, and the tired baby slipped into a sweet sleep. Mary covered him carefully with the old shawl and arranged the cover of the carriage so that the sun would not fall upon his face. They walked along more slowly, talking in low tones. Lancelot marched at Mary's side, looking up into her face with adoring glances. He could not be described as a good little boy by any stretch of a loving imagination. He had picked up his vocabulary from the men who worked in the mill and his conduct was as good as his word. But though Sawdust Alley was not yet conscious of a change the boy was being slowly transformed. Poverty had denied him his heritage of love and care-free play and his heart had been hungering for both. Mrs. McCann was a good mother as far as her opportunities allowed, and she had never been really unkind to her children. But even when her husband was living the burden of life had been too heavy for her. And now, all the thought and pride that should have been expended upon her children she gave to the beautiful homes up on the hill. The china and silver and fine

linen of her fortunate neighbours demanded all her care and she had none to spare for her home. The three little girls were hardy youngsters who apparently did not miss the tenderness that should have been theirs. But though Lancelot was indeed a bold warrior and had reduced the Alley to a state of serfdom through the power of a baby carriage, he had a tender heart that craved love and sympathy and responded to them as a flower to the sun.

Mary was the first person, since his father's death, that had given him any of that for which his child's heart was starving, and in return he gave her the full silent worship of his knightly young soul.

"I know all my lessons," he declared when Mary questioned him. "I got the right answer to the long division, and I can spell r-e-c-e-i-v-e and b-e-l-i-e-v-e, and I can say all the Provinces and their Capitals, an' a lot more."

When the geography lesson had been reviewed from Halifax to Vancouver, and pronounced perfect, they played a game. Each chose the city in which he wanted to live while the other had to guess why he wanted to live there. Winnipeg was his, Lancelot declared, because it was on the prairie and he could ride out and be a cow-boy or a mounted policeman in a red coat. Mary would rather live in Vancouver, because her very own Aunt, who was just like her mother, was there; and then she could take a boat and sail away to China any day

"Well, I bar to live in Vancouver, too," said Lance, forsaking Winnipeg immediately, "cause I wouldn't live anywhere where you wasn't."

"But I guess it's just as nice to live in Wawashene," said Mary. "Or it would be if all the streets were pretty like the ones up on the hill. When you get to be a big man you'll make them beautiful, won't you?"

Thereupon they played a new game; planned a new Sawdust Alley, made over to their hearts' desire. The narrow street between the ugly houses and the uglier fence of circus posters became a wide avenue shaded by towering elms. Every house was set back near the river with a lawn and a flower garden in front, and a red boathouse at the back. And the houses were all painted a dazzling white with green shutters, like Johnny Petatie's, and Lance's had a red roof to make it different.

"No, we'll have them all different," corrected Mary. "It'll be against the law to have two houses alike." They agreed that Danny Greeves' house must have a conservatory, because poor Danny loved flowers so, and that the mill boarding house should have a veranda all around for the men to sit and smoke. They had transformed the vacant lot next to the Carters' into a baseball diamond, and had set up a swing and a merry-go-round in everybody's back yard, when they arrived at the little white gate between the blue clumps of larkspur.

September had but heightened the glory of Johnny Petatie's garden. Mary confessed that it was lovelier than ever, now that the asters were all in bloom. Old Collie came down the path slowly, bowing his head and waving his tail in the hospitable fashion that became Johnny Petatie's dog. Lance ran ahead up the path to meet him, and dog and boy disappeared, capering around the house. Mary followed slowly up the flowery path. There was no one in sight, but she knew that Mrs. Hill would be in her chair by the window and Johnny Petatie would be out in the field. Sammy was still sleeping peacefully and she placed the carriage in the shade of the lilac bush beside the old stone step. As she did so, someone rose up from the hammock that hung behind the vines of the veranda. Mary turned and then stood perfectly still from very amazement wondering if she were dreaming that she had gone to the Ivory Palace. For there, before her, stood the Hunter of the Lake, in the very brown woodsman suit in which she had seen him twice before, tall and supple and Indian-like, with his surprising blue eyes in his dark face.

And he, too, stood as though transfixed, staring at Mary; and then they both said, at the same moment in startled voices, "Oh is it you?"

They both laughed at that and the Hunter seemed to come out of the spell. He sprang down the steps.

"Why," he stammered. "I really believe—why it's you! And you must be the Angel!"

And Mary answered with incoherence that matched his own.

"Why—it's you! And I really believe you must be Davy!"

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE IVORY PALACE

FOR the next three brief days Mary found Sawdust Alley transformed: turned into a green-and-white Ivory Palace with singing birds and blue sparkling waves. The magic was over it all the next afternoon when she went down to see if Sammy's cold was still improving, and found Johnny Petatie and his son there ahead of her. The tall, young woodsman seemed to fill up Mrs. McCann's little front room, being rendered taller by Sammy, who sat perched upon his shoulder, shouting for joy and apparently quite recovered.

"Ah, well, well, the Angel as usual!" cried the old man, running in from the kitchen with a chair for her. "Indeed, the Mother was saying you would be here to-day. We were saying so last night when we were reading our portion before retiring. We were reading that beautiful glimpse the Master has given us into Heaven where he says, 'In Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.' He was talking about the wee ones, you remember. And the Mother was worrying about Sammy and saying she was afraid Mrs. Mc-

Cann wouldn't rub on the goose-oil just right, and I was pointing out this verse to her; and then we were both just saying that indeed the Father had left some of the angels here on earth, and He had left one specially for these dear little ones here. And I have no doubt that this one doth 'behold the face of the Father' too," he added softly.

"Oh, Mr. Hill," faltered Mary, "you mustn't say things like that about me. You make me feel like all the Scribes and Pharisees!"

He laughed joyously. "Tut, tut, you're as modest as Davy, here. I must away back to my garden now. Come, Davy." He hurried away, but the younger man lingered. He looked down at Mary half-shyly.

"I've heard such wonderful things about this story hour," he said. "Do you mind if I pretend I'm Lance's age, and stay to listen? I love stories, don't I, Lance?"

"You may stay if you'll promise to tell one when I'm finished," Mary promised. "Come, Sammy, and we'll sit on the steps where it's nice and sunny."

So they both sat on the steps of Mrs. McCann's house while the La Plantes and the Carters and the Quinsys gathered around, and heard wonderful new tales that held them all transfixed. For when Mary had finished the thrilling adventures of the Little Red Hen and the Bad Old Fox, David Hunter told them about a really truly fox that lived away up

beyond the head of Lake Wawa, and the wonderful little town of beavers who built their dam by moonlight, and his two pet hawks that followed his camp wherever it moved. Jerry and Terry they were called, and their wings measured nearly four feet when they were outspread.

The magic lasted throughout the next day, for Mary was invited to Corrary for tea and in the evening David took her home; not down the Alley and up the shady street, that was far too short; but along the grassy path that led to his boat-house and into his canoe, and away down the river past the dark, silent mills, and the indistinct shapes of floating logs, out and around the sandy point into the Lake, and home past the Ivory Palace in the moonlight.

They knew a great deal about each other before the wonderful voyage was over. Mary told him about their old home in the little village, with Aunt Effie, who had been both father and mother to them; how they had come to spend a year with Uncle John, and how the fashionable, pleasure-seeking life about her was so different from what she had expected.

And he told her how his father had been killed in the woods by a falling tree a few weeks before he was born; how his mother had put up a heroic fight to face life alone and unaided with an infant in her arms; and how, when he was old enough to go to school, his new father had come and helped shoulder the burden.

"And a real father he's been to me," said David Hunter. "I remember I was just entering High School when he gave up teaching and we moved out to the little farm. And I used to come home from school with a bloody nose every night because the fellows used to call me 'Farmer' and 'Potato Hill,' and when they called my Dad 'Johnny Potato,' I used to get fighting mad. Now I rather like it. It reminds me of all the good father has done with his potatoes, fed whole families in the hard winters."

They were gliding past the Ivory Palace now, the white rock, and the stems of the birches shining softly in the moonlight. The canoe skimmed over the still mirror of the bay leaving a silver trail on its shadowy surface. Mary sat looking into the silent depths of the grove and waited. Had he found her little message? She was shy and frightened now, and half-wished she had not answered the sylvan letter.

"I'm glad you don't love the 'ugly man-made streets' any better than I do," David said softly.

Mary held her breath. Could it be merely a coincidence? Then she ventured recklessly.

"Yes, but I am afraid I haven't that energy of spirit that takes one away from them into the open

"When the sun is kindling
On the Eastern hill."

The canoe had just slipped out of the shadows of the birches, the moonlight fell full upon their faces. They looked into each other's guilty eyes, and laughed softly. They drifted for a little while in silence after that. Mary was grateful that David did not refer to the subject further. To talk about it would disturb its magic. It was enough that each knew.

"It must be glorious to live always in the woods," Mary said at last. "Don't you hate coming back to town?"

"I like coming home, of course. But I'm afraid I could never settle down with a row of houses in front of me and another beside me. Leetle Lac Grenier would spik too loud."

It seemed to Mary as though there was a sudden shadow on the moonlight. David Hunter did not belong to her world. The wild was ever calling him. He would go back to it and she would always have to walk paved streets.

"It's so much more worth while to be right next door to nature. And it seems such a useful life, to be making roads for the world through the wilderness."

"But it's far better to stay in the 'ugly man made streets' and make them beautiful, the way you are doing," David said. "Father has been telling me about your work in Sawdust Alley."

"Oh, your father sees everyone through his rose-

coloured glasses. I feel I'm not doing anything. It's so hard to get anyone to help."

"We're queer stupid things, we human beings," David said, trailing his paddle in the water where it left a silver track. "We make a town the way we engineers make a road. First we cut down the trees and underbrush and uproot stumps and make fires, and the place looks like the abomination of desolation and then we begin slowly to get a little order out of the chaos, we've made. But it's a long time before the road is built and wheat and coal can pass over it. Then the fire weed springs up, and the alder bushes and after years the road begins to look beautiful again. I think our cities and towns are like that. They are just in the making, and we haven't got past the digging, burning and tearing up stage."

"There doesn't seem to be even a fire-weed blooming in Sawdust Alley yet," said Mary.

"Oh, but there is! I saw ever so many. Why the Carter family never had a tidy yard in their history before. How did you do it? And Louie Devany has whitewashed his house, and he tells me they are all going to do it next spring, and plant gardens."

Mary forgot time and place. She could have floated along out there in the moonlight all night. But the long shafts of the town lights were stretching out to meet them and reluctantly they turned their canoe towards them.

She came home looking so radiant that her Uncle was moved to remark upon her appearance.

"Well, Mary II," he said, looking up from his book, "you look as if Sawdust Alley had turned into a sort of Jacob's Ladder and was reaching up to Heaven. Have you found a new scheme for drying up the cellars?"

Mary was conscious of Helen's earnestly enquiring regard, and her cheeks grew pinker.

"Danny Greeves has one," she said hurriedly, to cover her confusion. "He says that if he set fire to the lumber yard he thinks it would dry up his house so well that his mother would get better, arguing that if a small fire would do her good, a big one would cure her altogether."

"Graham promised he would see about those cellars away last spring. I do hope W. J. Clarkson hasn't forgotten about them. Have you managed to interest the Clarkson girls in your play-school yet?"

Mary blushed again. Since last Saturday she had forgotten the existence of the Clarkson girls. "They seem to be so busy about the bells," she stammered.

"Katherine was in this afternoon, Mary," Helen said. "The girls are all coming here to-morrow night to arrange for a big concert. You simply must be in this one."

"They've got to meet here, 'cause McWhirter won't let them practise in the church," cried Peter, who was slowly gathering his books together after a

heavy evening's work. "I heard him jawin' away at that oldest Miss Clarkson, the one that looks like the American Eagle. He said he wouldn't have any more o' them ungodly play-actin' scandals around the church. And, say, didn't she light into him! It's a good thing she was brought up in this end of the town; if she'd lived down in your end, Molly, she'd be a corker over the back fence."

"Peter, dear," remonstrated his elder sister. "Come and see the book Katherine brought, Mary. She's planning a wonderful pageant. Mr Douglas is to double the money we make, you know."

CHAPTER XVII

OUT OF THE PAST

THE magie departed from Sawdust Alley the next day, when the Hunter of the Lake took up his paddle and once more "vanished in the shining trail." But there was more than the light of common day left in the wake of his canoe. Mary had been happy in her work before; she was radiant now. As the chill days of autumn advanced, sickness came to Sawdust Alley to stay; the play school received but small help from those who could help so easily if they would; Laneelot took one cold after another and made but slow progress with his lessons; Danny was out of work; and Mrs. Jones grew steadily weaker. But none of these drawbacks nor all of them could dampen Mary's spirits nor quench her ardour. There was always a letter at the Farm with a message for her, and an enquiry as to how her work was going.

It was well that she possessed a high heart for the winter proved a trying one. Winter was always a lingering visitor to the little northern town, and one that often outstayed his welcome. Wawashene had the reverse of the genial climate of Goldsmith's

Village: "Here smiling autumn its earliest visit paid, and parting winter's lingering drifts delayed." Day after day, week after week, the snow came steadily down till the little town was well nigh smothered in a fleecy shroud. It piled high over the houses and lawns and choked the streets. Wat Watson, with his snow plough, was the busiest institution in the town; and as he passed up and down clearing a path for the school children, he gouged out a canyon, the banks of which grew higher and higher every morning. Fences disappeared, hedges became but vague outlines. Every night a fresh carpet was laid and the pure streets bore no mark to sully their whiteness. The sidewalks were paved with marble, the roads where the sleighs and cutters ran were pure silver. At night, under the electric lights, the ermine draped trees, the diamond strewn lawns, and the marble and silver highways blazed and glittered, and the little town became such a place of radiance and beauty as good old Haroun al Raschid never visioned in his most golden prime.

Peter was given charge of the manse furnace which was lit in October and burned with varying success until April. The cold season weighed very heavily upon his leisurely shoulders, for beside the dreadful labour of the furnace, Helen compelled him to shovel the paths to the street and to the church. And as he tunnelled his trenches every morning be-

fore school, no one dreamed that he was hardening his muscles and strengthening his back for the digging of another trench in a far-off land swept by shot and shell.

Though the World War was far from his wildest imaginings, he carried on a brisk campaign against McWhirter all winter. The janitor of St. Stephen's shovelled his own paths with great care and propriety. But there was a narrow area between the church and the manse which neither he nor Peter was in haste to claim. Each generously accorded it to the other, and it became a sort of No Man's Land upon which the snow accumulated and over which flew high words, angry and hot enough to have melted all its drifts.

Down on Sawdust Alley there was no white expanse of lawn, no glittering marble highway. The smoke from the mills and the trains blackened the snow, and the ugly grey houses looked uglier and bleaker than ever. Early in the winter the saw mill closed and the men went north to the lumber camps for the winter's cutting. Processions of teams bearing great loads of saw-logs came jingling down the road past Johnny Petatie's farm, and the light bobsleighs went flying back, into the silent white forest.

With most of the men away at the camp, life took on an easy irregularity in Sawdust Alley. Since there was no Tony to come in and scold if dinner was not ready, Mrs. Quinsy argued, why bother

about a dinner. The children helped themselves to whatever was lying about that resembled food when they came in from school, and mother visited the neighbours, or went up town to the picture show. Almost all Mrs. Quinsy's neighbours shared her holiday mood and joined her whenever there was enough change in the house for the price of admission. When Tony and the other men came down from the camp for a week end they, too, caught the holiday spirit and proceeded to celebrate in their own way. And so there was drunkenness and fighting on the streets and in Mrs. Moore's boarding house, and gambling in the rear of the little store.

Mary and her little band of workers strove patiently to make life a little better for the children at least. It was hard sledding. Mary found the visiting a great trial, now that she could not sit out on the steps. The little windows of the homes were all frozen down and the doors were never left open a moment longer than necessary, for the winter was bitter and fuel was dear, and the overcharged atmosphere was almost too much for her.

"You have to get a consecrated nose as well as a consecrated heart in this work, Mary," Bertha said, trying to make light of their trials, as they left the consumptive Mrs. Jones coughing over the stove in an air-tight room with all her children gathered about her.

But there was always a good stretch of fresh air

blowing down from the river to be inhaled on Mary's way up to Corrary. Here everything was fresh and spotless under the capable hands of Tilly Cameron.

Like Bertha, Mary often confessed that she would have given up altogether had it not been for Johnny Petatie's cheery faith, his unfailing optimism, and his prayers. Most of the young people of the church continued too busy to give her much help.

Katherine Clarkson would promise to teach Lance and then telephone at the last minute that there was a sleighing party to Barbay and she simply had to go. Gertrude Graydon did not even remember to telephone the day she promised to sit with Mrs. Greeves, but went skating with young Harding instead.

But in spite of discouragements, the work prospered, and it expanded also. Mary found a second Sawdust Alley quite as unfortunate as the first. It was a lane running up from the Flats on the other side of the tracks. Here lived more poor and sick and unfortunate huddled in more ugly houses owned by Graham Douglas.

"I'm beginning to hate his very name, Bertha," Mary said hotly, the day they visited this new area and found the wretched, bleak cottage where Shifty Sal lived; the woman with the dark, evil face and the more evil reputation.

"You really shouldn't blame him quite so much, Mary," Bertha answered. "After all, this poverty

and sin is a disease of such long standing that no one person can be held responsible."

Mary pondered over this. Bertha, always generous and slow to blame others, was especially kindly in her judgment of Graham Douglas. "I wonder why she thinks so much of him," was a thought that often disturbed her vaguely.

Winter brought heavy business cares to Graham Douglas. He was often called away, either down to the city or up to the lumber camps at the head of the lake. But he was not too busy to see Mary Erskine frequently. He drove a dancing team and a high, shining sleigh piled with fur robes, and one sunny day he called unannounced at the manse to ask the young ladies to take a drive. Mary was taken unawares and Helen had accepted for both of them before she could frame an excuse. The next time his invitation came over the telephone, and she pleaded a previous engagement; but the third time, when he drove up suddenly again, without giving her a chance to evade him, she repeated her undignified performance of the early summer and ran away.

A kindly fate had arranged that she should be dressed ready for her afternoon walk to the post-office with her Uncle. The sound of the sleigh-bells brought her to the parlour window, and then sent her flying out at the kitchen door. There was an old abandoned stable at the foot of the garden, a relic of the days long passed when the minister of

St. Stephen's had a large country congregation and kept a horse. It was now the special property of Peter and Billy Coles, and was crammed to the very door with an accumulation of all the broken machinery and electrical appliances that the two spent their lives gathering together. They were at present engaged on the contrivance of a machine which, when finished, Peter prophesied would shovel snow or mow the lawn for him while he sat on the veranda and read a novel.

Mary fled down the narrow snowy path marked out by the boys' feet and took refuge in this dusty and chilly sanctuary. She watched breathlessly through the cob-webbed window until, after apparently hunting for her errant sister in vain, Helen came out robed for the drive and stepped into the sleigh. Then half gleeful, half-ashamed, Mary stole down the path that led to the church and made her escape.

Helen regarded her younger sister with righteous indignation, when, an hour after her return from the drive Mary came swinging in, rosy and bright from a snow-shoe tramp with Peter.

"It was really very unkind of you, Mary," she declared. "You put me in such an awkward position. Mr. Douglas had to ask me to go alone with him, of course; and you know he wanted you."

Mary's heart smote her. Helen was always kind and considerate, and had really been badly used.

Peter had not been aware of Mary's escape, and expressed high amusement. He stopped to reason with her as he went to his evening's work.

"Say, Molly, you're a corker all right. I didn't know you were runnin' away when I met you! What's the matter, anyhow?"

"I hate driving with Mr. Douglas, Pete. I simply won't go with him, now! And Helen will just have to put up with him herself."

This was all quite beyond Peter's comprehension. "Well say! Girls are queer," he declared. "I wouldn't run far from a fellow with a team like what he's got, you bet." He left the problem unsolved and went upstairs to his lessons, bidding Mary leave him alone with his misery, which meant his Latin.

It was one of Dr. Sutherland's rare evenings at home, and Mary betook herself and a book to the corner of the study sofa near the open fire. She loved to spend her evenings there; and he loved to glance up from his work and see her bright head shining in the fire light.

"Well, Mary II," he said, looking up after a long silence, "what's the absorbing tale to-night?"

Mary blushed. The tell-tale rose-colour was very apt to flood her cheeks these days, whenever she was taken unawares.

"It's Bertha's," she stammered. It was the little volume of Canadian verse, and she closed it quickly.

She had been reading Pauline Johnson's "Re-Voyage":

"I sometimes wonder
If you too wish this sky
Could be the blue we sailed so softly under
In that sun kissed July;
Sailed in the warm and yellow afternoon,
With hearts in touch and tune."

"It's that little book of Canadian poems, you know."

He left his desk, and seating himself opposite her before the fire, took up the book. It opened at "Leetle Lac Grenier," and he read it aloud. "I'm so glad you like nature poetry, Mary. Your mother had the same taste as you. What's Davy Hunter's name doing here? I suppose Bertha loaned it to him. You've met David, haven't you?"

Mary got up from her seat and hurriedly put more wood on the fire. "Yes," she said with her back turned to him. "I've—met him."

"Fine lad, David," he said turning the leaves absently. "He's been an ideal son to old Johnny Petatie. He's a bit of a poet himself, that boy. I suppose the old man has told you though."

Mary's eyes were so radiant that he gazed at her in admiration. "No, I didn't know," she said a little breathlessly. "But I knew,—I guessed that he had a poet's spirit." She longed to ask something about him, but her courage failed. But her Uncle was

looking at her contemplatively and his mind had gone to another subject.

"I'm sorry you missed that drive this afternoon," he said suddenly. Again Mary's guilty cheeks flamed. She looked down at her trim shoes crossed on the hearth stone.

"I—I went last week," she stammered.

"And you think it was too soon to go again?" he asked, laughing. "Evidently Graham didn't think so." There was silence. Dr. Sutherland balanced a ruler very carefully on his finger. He was looking very happy. "I'm glad to see that you and he are good friends, Mary. I knew that you would change your opinion of him when you came to know him better."

Mary had no reply for this. She sat staring into the fire in deep embarrassment. "There is something I've always wanted to tell you about Graham Douglas," he went on. "I don't think I ever quite explained to you what a good friend he has been to me. It's a subject I never like to refer to, naturally." His face grew troubled. "Things were not always as peaceable in St. Stephen's as they are now, Mary, and there was quite serious trouble when I was younger and more aggressive. I am afraid I was not as wise as I should have been. In youth we are apt to go pulling up the tares so vigorously that we destroy much of the wheat. A few years after Alice Grey and Duncan Sinclair

were sent out to the foreign field, the church was divided over the subject of missions. There was a new younger party who thought we were spending too much on outside work and letting home affairs fall into neglect. The other party thought we ought to pay the salaries of both of our members who had given their lives to the foreign work, and Duncan kept writing for funds for a school. At the same time the younger folks were agitating for a new church-building and a new organ, both of which we really needed. I wanted our church to be strongly missionary and Dr. Peterson and Mr. McArthur and Mrs. Graydon and Graham's father were my staunch supporters; and old Mr. Clarkson, the girls' grandfather, headed the other party. I know now that I did not handle the situation wisely. I said things I should not have said." He paused as though the memory of it were painful. "The givings fell off so that only half of my salary was contributed. I felt I should resign, but I dreaded to leave the congregation rent asunder, and I knew that my going would only widen the breach, and the cause would suffer. It was when things were darkest that Graham came to my aid. His good old father had been laid away, but his son stood loyally by me. For several years Graham subscribed half my stipend himself and no one but Dr. Peterson knew anything about it. It was a trying time, but the Lord helped us through. We had to compromise somewhat, of

course. That would have been the wiser course in the beginning. The new organ was bought and improvements were made in the church building; and we gave up Duncan Sinclair's salary and of course his school. But we paid Alice Grey's till she died. The breach was gradually healed and those who had left came back one by one. Old Mr. Clarkson returned just a year before his death. The day that he came back with all his family I raised my Ebenezer and said, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.' Since then things have gone smoothly. There is not the spiritual fervour there was when Duncan Sinclair and Alice Grey gave their lives to the foreign work, but we have a good warm-hearted congregation, and things have gone not so badly. But you can understand how grateful I feel towards Graham and how warm a place he occupies in my esteem."

Mary listened in growing dismay. She wanted to fling her arms about his neck and hold his bent white head against her breast. She was too young and inexperienced to read the real meaning of his confession: the smothering of a gentle, kindly spirit by cold opposition, the lowering of high ideals. But she felt keenly the pity of it all, saw the struggle and the discouragement; and her heart cried out against the fact that it was Graham Douglas who had come to the rescue.

"Oh, Uncle John, dear," she said incoherently, "I

know you have had all kinds of troubles and worries. If I ever thought I'd add to them one feather's weight, I'd cut a hole in the ice and jump into the lake."

"Why, bless my heart, Mary, child!" he exclaimed, half-laughing, "you add to my troubles! Why you're the sunshine of all my days. You're the only person I ever knew who can dust a desk, even when it's elbow deep, and not disturb the Blue Book!"

The subject was changed from grave to gay, but Mary went upstairs to bed filled with heavy forebodings. Evidently life was not so simple as it looked. It was wretchedly complex. She had come to St. Stephen's determined to help Uncle John in every way possible, and it would appear that the way to help him was the way her whole heart turned against.

"Oh, God, help me to do what is right," she prayed tremulously, "no matter what may follow."

There were gossips a-plenty in Wawashene, and they had always made it their business to know where Graham Douglas spent his evenings. Mrs. Harding, who had nothing to do but take her medicine at stated hours and look after her nerves, was the queen-gossip of them all, and the high authority to whom they went for accurate information. But in this one case she found herself annoyingly deficient in facts. She knew exactly how many times

Graham Douglas called at the manse and the number of drives the Erskine girls had with him. But she was not sure of one important detail. Which of the young ladies was his choice? That was the question that was agitating everyone, and Mrs. Harding was ashamed of herself for not knowing. She made an attempt to learn something from Helen, but had been completely baffled. The elder Miss Erskine was rather unapproachable; but one could take liberties with the little shy one. She would find out from Mary.

The first big rehearsal of the historical pageant the young ladies were preparing was held in Mrs. Harding's drawing room, as McWhirter still refused to have the worldly thing appear in any of the church rooms. Mary had taken but a minor part in it, and was standing watching Helen sweep out upon the floor as Mary, Queen of Scots, when Mrs. Harding beckoned to her.

"Come and sit beside me, Miss Mary," she said, pulling her down on to the velvet Chesterfield under the big rose-shaded lamp. "You really ought to have a bigger part in this. Why aren't you Queen Elizabeth? You'd make an excellent one if you were only a little taller."

"I've been so busy," Mary said simply. "Beside, I don't act well. Helen does all that sort of thing for both of us."

"You're working too hard down on the Mill Flats,

my dear. You'll ruin your beautiful complexion if you keep on going there so much. Those McCann children are fairly pampered by the people of St. Stephen's. Mrs. Kirkwall practically keeps them in clothes, and Graham, himself, is so generous to them all. But, of course, you know all about that. You and he are such good friends; or is it your sister?"

"It's all of us," said Mary, feeling her face growing hot. "Mr. Douglas has always been a good friend to Uncle John, and of course he includes his family."

Mrs. Harding looked disappointed. "Do you mind handing me that cushion, my dear; this sofa always gets on my nerves. Thank you. I'm afraid you're the guilty one," she added playfully, "you're blushing beautifully."

Mary sat in miserable silence. She was longing desperately for Helen; she would know how to put Mrs. Harding in her place.

"Well, well, never mind," she said laughing. "He's the catch of the town, you know; and there's no need to look so distressed. By the way, how are you getting on with that play-school the girls were talking about?"

Mary drew a deep breath of relief and tried to tell her something about the amateur kindergarten, and how Muriel McArthur and the Peterson girls and Bertha Evans were teaching the little folk three afternoons a week.

"Perfectly splendid," Mrs. Harding said enthusiastically. "Bertha Evans is a grand girl; it was really too bad about her and Graham, wasn't it?"

Mary looked at her in mute wonder. "I—I don't understand," she said nervously.

"Why, surely she's told you. I thought you and she were very intimate friends. Really? In my day girls all told each other their love affairs. Please hand me that fan, my dear, will you? This room's insufferably hot. How well your sister acts. She's so graceful too.

"She and Rich are the very handsomest couple in the room, don't you think?" She was silent for a moment watching her son lead Helen out in a stately minuet. Mary said nothing. She was quite ready to agree that Helen was the handsomest girl in the room, but she could see nothing good even in the appearance of Mrs. Harding's fashionable and rather flashy son.

"Oh, about Bertha and Graham. It was a school boy and girl affair, of course; but, unlike most things of that sort, it lasted beyond school days. Bertha taught school here afterwards and she was always looking after that dreadful Mrs. Greeves, poor creature. Did you know that Mrs. Greeves is a relation of Mrs. W. J. Clarkson? It's a wonder if she hasn't told you. Poor Mrs. W. J.! It's very trying to have a skeleton that won't stay five minutes in the

closet. Well, I really don't remember the details of the affair, but Graham and Bertha quarrelled over his treatment of Danny or something. The poor boy's a hopeless idiot anyway. His father was killed by a saw,—a dreadful accident—such a sad affair, just after he had saved enough money to send Danny to school. Graham's father had been helping him. He was a very good old man, though quite common. The Douglasses were really not anybody till they made their money, you know. It's really very foolish for young girls to be too aggressive in things of that sort. But in the end, when everyone was thinking they would get married, Bertha left and went to the University. And Graham began to get rich right away, and Bertha is teaching yet. It really seems a pity, because she has a rather trying family—excellent people, of course, but not the sort to give their daughter a social position, and if she had married Graham——”

Mary managed to break away from her hostess before her tongue got her into hopeless trouble. “I must remember that she's a member of Uncle John's church,” she kept repeating over and over. She poured out her dismayed soul to Helen as soon as they were safely at home.

Her sister was very sympathetic and comforting. “I wouldn't worry about it, dear,” she said soothingly. “Mrs. Harding is very nervous and ill and she picks up bits of gossip that are very likely only

half truths. There is very likely no foundation for that story about Bertha, and beside you know quite well that Uncle wouldn't think so much of Mr. Douglas if he weren't everything that is good."

This was of very little comfort to Mary. It was horrible to think that the gossips were linking her name with Mr. Douglas's, and still more horrible to think that Bertha might still care for him. Life was surely a dreadful problem.

"I wish we had never let Aunt Effie go away. She was right when she said something dreadful would happen to us if she left us," she declared. "I wish we had never come to Wawashene."

"Oh, Mary Erskine," cried her sister, half amused, half impatient. "Was there ever anyone as ungrateful as you? You are the envy of every other girl in St. Stephen's, and you are making yourself unhappy over your good fortune."

She stopped suddenly, dismayed at the unwonted sight of tears in Mary's eyes.

"Oh, I didn't mean anything, Mary," she cried remorsefully; "it was only in fun. Why, Molly!"

For Mary's bright head had gone down on the bed and she was shaking with sobs. Helen ran to her and put her arms around the little sister in deep distress. "Oh, Molly dear, oh, don't! Do you feel sick? Have you a headache or a pain anywhere, dear. Oh, I'm so sorry for what I said!"

Mary's head came up. "Oh, I'm nothing but a

g-goose," she quavered, wiping her eyes, "and I—I'm not howling about anything you said, you dear simpleton, but I don't like Mr. Douglas, Nell," she added with a wail. "He's so overbearing and he's not a bit kind to his men—and I just can't stand it if Mrs. Harding and all the other horrid old gossips are talking about me. Oh, I wish Aunt Effie would come back!"

"Oh, Molly, dear, don't! If you don't like him you don't need to go out with him again. Don't cry. It's all right. You needn't even see him again if you don't want to."

"But I have to," whispered Mary. "Oh, Nell, I'm afraid to offend him. Uncle John likes him, and he wants me to like him, I know. And I'm afraid if I let him see I don't that Mr. Douglas will do something awful. He might drive Uncle John out of the church——"

"Oh, Mary, child, that's nonsense, dear!"

"No it isn't nonsense. Uncle John told me. Mr. Douglas just owns St. Stephen's and everyone in it."

"Why, whatever did Uncle John say?"

Mary told the story of their Uncle's early struggles, of the friend who had come to the rescue, and to whom the Minister of St. Stephen's now owed everything.

Helen listened in wonder. "Oh, Mary, dear, don't you see what a perfectly wonderful thing it would be if you could care for him. It would solve

everything," she whispered, stroking her sister's hair gently.

"No, it wouldn't. He would just amuse himself for a while and then treat me the way he did Bertha."

"I'm sure he wouldn't. I've watched him and I know," said Helen with deep wisdom. But Mary shook her stubborn head. The tears were coming again and her sister could only caress her in silent distress.

It seemed the strangest turn of a perverse fate that this great good fortune should be lying at Mary's feet and she should be weeping over it instead of rejoicing.

"Don't you think you could try, dear?" she asked as a last effort.

But Mary's head shook violently. Helen did not know what a preposterous thing she was asking; try to forget the Hunter of the Lake, the flash of his paddle and the magic of his smile! Graham Douglas might be the greatest saint that ever worshipped in St. Stephen's and be possessed of gold piled as high as his mill and it would make no difference.

But she could not tell Helen this. How could she confess that she had let her fancy stray away to one who perhaps never gave her a thought, and whose love was all for the freedom of the wild?

Helen was very comforting nevertheless, and

Mary went to bed feeling that perhaps the tangle was not altogether hopeless. Her sister counselled waiting.

"It won't be such a very long time till Aunt Effie is home," she said, "and one of us at least will have to go back to Mayfair. And if you find things are too hard here, that will be a way out. And in the meantime, don't worry, dear, but try to be nice to Mr. Douglas."

CHAPTER XVIII

SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW

THE growing interest of Graham Douglas on the one hand and the lack of interest of St. Stephen's on the other, were still making life something of a burden to Mary, when Christmas came bringing a magic gift from the far North that turned all the shadows into sunlight and touched life anew with the rose-colour of romance. It was a simple little square of birch-bark bearing a pen-and-ink sketch, and beneath, a few lines of poetry in a draughtsman's best lettering. The sketch showed a little strip of wooded shore, surrounding a curving bay; no need to tell Mary where the artist had seen that white rock, and those slim white-stemmed birches, and the feathery island beyond!

And beneath ran the message.

"The snows outside are wild and white;
The gusty flue shouts through the night;
And by the lonely chimney light
I sit and dream of summer.

'Tis not the voice of falling rain,
Or dream wind blown through latticed pane,
When earth will laugh in green again,
That makes me dream of summer."

Only the two little stanzas, but Mary knew the rest of William Wilfred Campbell's little poem, "A Mid-Winter Night's Dream." Her cheeks grew crimson and her breath came quickly as she recalled the closing stanza:

"But hopes will then have backward flown,
Like fleets of promise, long outblown,
And Love once more will greet his own;
This is my dream of summer."

He had not been bold enough to write that, she was glad and sorry all at the same time. But her heart kept time to the lilting lines. He was not longing to be away, then, but dreaming of the day when he would be home. And had he guessed that she would know the rest of the poem?

She received another significant Christmas gift; a huge box of expensive chocolates and a sheaf of roses with stems as long as her arm. Helen's watchful eye did not fail to note that her sister was not nearly so happy over this last present. Mary handed the candy over to Peter and Billy Coles, and as they both loved chocolates not wisely but too well, they proceeded to make themselves gloriously ill. She placed half the sheaf of roses in a tall vase on her Uncle's desk and the other half she carried down to Sawdust Alley. But she hung the pen-and-ink sketch carefully on her bed-room wall, in a very honourable place, just beneath Aunt Effie's photograph.

Helen regarded it with delicate brows uplifted.

"I had no idea you knew Mr. Hill or Mr. Hunter, or whoever he is, so well, Mary," she said uneasily.

Mary knew that it would be impossible to explain to Helen that she had always known him, intimately.

"I—I see so much of his father and mother," she said vaguely, and changed the subject hastily.

Whatever lean days Sawdust Alley had to endure during a hard winter, Christmas day overbalanced them all in its superabundance. The ladies of St. Stephen's met the day before Christmas and collected enough food to supply the Mill Boarding House all winter.

Great bursting baskets and cracking boxes were piled upon groaning hand-sleighs and Mr. Austin, with a crowd of boys from the Sunday school, went off in joyous procession down the shining white hills on Christmas Eve, and distributed their bounty at each door along the Alley.

For the next few weeks the population of Sawdust Alley were like the Israelites when the wind brought the visitation of quails till they lay about the camp "two cubits high upon the face of the earth." They lived in a very welter of turkey and cranberry sauce and plum-pudding and candy and nuts, until Mary and Bertha grew anxious lest some of their little pupils die of too high living.

Having done lavishly by their poor neighbours, St. Stephen's promptly forgot all about them for

another year. But there was a little company that never forgot, and it was growing slowly but surely. The little play-school was kept open regularly; Lancelot had lessons every day; Mrs. McCann's front room had been transformed into a pretty little school-room; and every Monday afternoon the mothers of the kindergarten met at Johnny Petatie's for a cup of tea, and Dr. Peterson or Mrs. Graydon talked about ventilation or good foods, or how to treat a cold, or the inadvisability of bringing up a baby on a diet of pickles and cold tea.

And so, though the days often brought discouragement, Mary's spirits soared above them. St. Stephen's might continue to be indifferent to everything but its bells; Graham Douglas might be a menacing shadow in the background; but Lance was getting an education, Danny's mother was slowly improving, the little Carters and the Joneses and the Quinsys were growing less like street gamins and more like human children, and above all, once a fortnight, out of the magic North there came a letter to turn the world all rose-colour!

For, of course, Mary had deemed it merely polite to write a demure little note of thanks to the far-off magic Northland for the pretty Christmas gift, and the recipient of her note seemed to find something in it that required a very early reply. There was a question in the reply regarding Lance and Sammy, which, though Johnny Petatie could have answered

it much better, Mary felt she could not possibly ignore, and then she suddenly discovered that all her days were divided into glowing periods by regular letters from the Northland.

So Mary ran about her work and played rollicking airs on the piano; and danced the Irish Washerwoman with Peter; and dressed up in Mrs. McTavish's green wrapper, and gave such vivid impersonations of that lady's chattiness as caused reminiscent chills to go up her Uncle's spine even in the midst of his helpless laughter.

Helen was a little disturbed by these outbursts of gaiety. They seemed to have too much connection with those mysterious letters from the north. One never could depend upon Mary, she was always doing something queer; and though there could be no doubt that she was very polite to Mr. Douglas, she was never quite cordial. And what could she find to write about to Johnny Petatie's son?

After Christmas, interest in the bell fund rather languished. Graham Douglas came forward generously, according to promise, and wrote a cheque duplicating the amount the young ladies had raised. The total sum was very gratifying; but, the spur being removed, the workers felt they had earned a vacation. So, very much to Mary's relief, they took one.

Wawashene society was not at its gayest in the winter. Summer was the harvest time of the

young ladies, for it brought so many new young men to town. In the winter the proportion of young ladies at a party was sadly in the majority; and, as the social life was entirely in their hands, out-door sports had but a small place. In a little, hilly snow-smothered town, with a lake and a river all its own, there were very few snowshoeing, tobogganing, skating or skiing parties. It seemed such a waste of opportunity, the Costly Clarksons argued, to go to all the work and worry of dragging out enough young men for a party, and then to wear any old thing. Everybody looked a fright after a snowshoe tramp anyway, no matter what she put on.

So when the young people wanted a really good time, they shut themselves up in a heated room and danced the nights away, with no thought for the wondrous miracle of winter's glory spread out for them nightly under the silver stars.

There was a small and feeble Young People's Society in St. Stephen's which Mary and Helen attended, and which, like everything else in the church, was languishing for leadership. Then there was the Alice Grey Mission Circle which met monthly and sewed for some vague, far-off impersonal cause in the great West. But Mary had long ago given up any attempt to vitalise them. Her heart was down on Sawdust Alley and thither all her energies followed.

"I'm afraid I'm not helping Uncle John at all,"

she often said to herself reproachfully, as she surveyed the work that ought to be done, but which she had no idea how to attack.

“You’re helping your Uncle most when you’re doing the Master’s work,” Johnny Petatie told her, when she hinted her doubts to him. “If He had been living here in Wawashene, instead of in Nazareth, I’m sure He’d spend most of His time down around the Mill Flats, indeed. So just let your divine discontent grow, lassie; the Father knows all about it, and He’ll see that St. Stephen’s gets the benefit some day.”

Nevertheless, it sometimes seemed to Mary that spring would never come,—that it would always be winter down in Sawdust Alley. Everywhere were colds and incessant coughing. The play-school had to close altogether in February on account of an epidemic of whooping cough, which every one of the little McCanns, from Lance to Sammy, joined in vigorously. Mrs. McCann fell ill in the midst of it, and lay in bed for two weeks with no one but her sick children to care for her, and no money coming in to pay the swelling bills.

There were worse ills than coughs and colds, too. The eldest Carter daughter, a delicate, overgrown girl of fifteen, whose mother had died of over-work and under-nourishment, and left her at the head of the family, fell into evil company and all Mrs. Graydon’s efforts to rescue her proved vain.

One bitter night, early in March, while the Costly Clarksons and their friends danced till the stars began to fade over the grey, ice-bound lake, Mrs. Jones, the poor consumptive mother, folded her wasted hands, closed her tired eyes, and gave up the hopeless task of living.

When the meagre little funeral procession had returned from its journey up the grey hills to the cemetery, Mary left the neighbours gathered in the bereaved home, and went out the snowy road to gain some comfort from her friends at the farm.

Their kindness and sympathy broke down Mary's cheery fortitude and she sat down on the low footstool by Mrs. Hill's chair and gave way to tears.

"There's nobody but Julie to look after them now," she sobbed; "and she's only fourteen, and she'll go just the way Lily Carter did!"

The sight of the Angel in tears was so unprecedented that the old people were overcome with distress. They drew her close to the fire, Mrs. Hill holding her hand and patting it, and Johnny Petatie insisting upon taking off her rubbers. They treated her so much like a hurt child, and made such anxious efforts to divert her attention, that Mary was in danger of hysterical laughter.

Tilly Cameron rushed to the cellar for a plate of cookies, and Mrs. Hill proceeded to make a cup of tea. Johnny Petatie further tried to interest her by showing off the wonderful mechanism of Davy's

latest gift. It was a hanging lamp with a green shade, placed just over the old sofa behind the stove.

"Wasn't he the cute rascal to have it put there?" whispered Mrs. Hill, fearing lest her husband miss some of the lamp's best points. "Look at the way it's screwed into the ceiling. He wrote to Jimmy Moore to come and put it up."

"Davy's stopped giving us things for the Best Room since he found we only use it for company," interposed Johnny Petatie.

"He says that Father never enjoys anything till he gives it away," continued the old lady, "and he's never going to give him anything that can't be nailed to the house!"

They both laughed joyfully, and Mary could not but join them. When she had been further comforted by a cup of hot tea, rich with cream, she set out to return to the empty home of the Jones family.

Johnny Petatie and his dog accompanied her to the gate, where two white snow-mounds marked the graves of the larkspurs.

"You see, the Father knows all about it," he said, his blue eyes shining. "I do not agree with those who say it's the Father's will. I can't just see that He wanted to take the mother away from her children. But He knows all about it." He paused at the little gate and looked back over his snowy garden and the leafless boughs of the orchard. A vivid bar of orange stretched along the horizon

marked the chill winter sunset. Johnny Petatie pointed to the snow-mounds, touched with rose-colour.

"Look at that, now. How could anybody believe there'd be a garden here? But we *know*, you see?" His voice sank to a whisper, he was like an eager child telling a wonderful secret. "We know that He's got apple blossoms hidden in those dead trees; and we know He'll be sure to bring up the tulips and the larkspur and the Canterbury bells again. Oh, yes, indeed, never you fear. The Father never fails if we can just wait. 'Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him.' He cares far more than we do and He just couldn't stand it if He didn't know there was something grand and good waiting for us all at the end of this life. Oh, never you fear, lassie! You must not be spoiling your bright youth fretting over what you cannot help. The Father knows all about it."

When the motherless Jones children had been put to bed, Mary went up the hills in the still whiteness of the winter night. Snow had fallen again early in the evening, and the lawns lay spread out fresh and glittering with diamonds in the electric light. Sleighs passed to and fro, the horses' feet noiseless in the soft down, the bells muffled and distant. The little town was hushed and lovely under its fleecy covering.

Across the sparkling lawns, between shrouded

trees and hedges, rosy beams of light stretched out from curtained windows. The church was a crystal palace of colour and light, that streamed from the high gothic windows. The choir was practising the anthem for Sunday. As Mary passed up the deeply cut path to the manse door there floated out, sweet and clear on the still air, the age-long assurance:

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Mary felt a great uplift of spirit. Old Johnny Petatie was right. The Father knew. He was the dwelling-place of His children, round about them as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. He who made the world as beautiful as it was in its white wonder to-night had some glorious destiny in store for it. She felt she could never be quite so discouraged again.

She ran up the steps and swung open the door bringing a rush of cold bracing air into the house; and there facing her were the two great problems of her life. On the hall table lay a letter, one swift glance at the strong flowing handwriting was enough to tell her it was her regular message out of the North. But beyond it, in the parlour, she spied Graham Douglas sitting chatting with Helen and her Uncle over a glowing fire.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RUMMAGE SALE

WHEN the Lenten season opened the riot of social engagements subsided.

"I guess we'd better get up some sort of a spree for those bells," Miss Katherine Clarkson announced. "I declare, I forgot all about them last winter, there's been so much going on. The Angli-cans won't go to anything much for about six weeks so I think it would be a good idea if we rushed round and got up a sale or something to make money."

A joint meeting of older and younger ladies was accordingly held. Mrs. W. J. Clarkson convened it in the church without fear of opposition, as Andy McWhirter was at home suffering from an attack of the "Grippe." It was thereupon unanimously decided that the ladies of St. Stephen's Church hold a rummage sale down in the poorer section of the town. It would clear their houses of a great deal of rubbish just at housecleaning time; would provide the Mill Flats with decent clothing for the summer; and would, above all, net a nice little sum for the bell fund.

There was but one dissenting voice but it was a

powerful one and had to be listened to. Mrs. Dick Ellwood considered rummage sales vulgar. Why could they not get up an evening of readings from Browning or act a play of Shakespeare's?

Mrs. Dick Ellwood was one of the most prominent of St. Stephen's social leaders. She had but recently come to Wawashene but since her arrival she had shown a tendency to dispute the claims of the Royal Family. Her husband was the manager of the larger of the town's two banks, which alone would have given her an unassailable position. But she had personal qualities that showed her to have royal blood and to render her dangerous as a possible usurper. She dressed very fashionably, was an excellent bridge player, and entertained at dinner parties. And beside all this she was literary. She read Ibsen and could not possibly be persuaded to go to a picture show or even a play in the town hall. And she had been reported as saying that Wawashene society was not at all cultured.

Mrs. W. J. Clarkson, secure in her position as head of the reigning house scoffed. "Readings from Browning! You might as well have readings from a Latin Dictionary. Nobody'd come!"

"People won't go to anything where they can't have a good laugh, and I don't blame them," declared Mrs. Kirkwall, who had come in late and had not heard the discussion. "If this book you're talking about has some good jokes in it let's have it."

There was some more discussion, but while a few of the younger set held with Mrs. Ellwood, affirming that they simply adored both Browning and Shakespeare, the large majority decided for the rummage sale.

Mrs. Ellwood withdrew in a quiet dignified manner but with an air of washing her hands of the whole affair.

"You'll see she won't give us a rag to sell," complained Mrs. W. J., "and her attic is just crammed with old clothes, Mrs. McCann told me."

"Yes, she will, Aunt Margaret," declared Katherine Clarkson, with a rather superior air. "Mrs. Dick and I are good friends. I know she won't refuse me."

This was the one function for raising money for the bells into which Mary entered with all her heart. A rummage sale would be a great thing for Mrs. McCann and the Quinsys, and, indeed, everyone in her play-school would be benefitted by a chance to buy some clothing.

So she willingly shouldered every piece of work that was laid upon her. There was an old empty store-room across the tracks from Sawdust Alley; it was just the place for the sale. Mary secured it, being very intimate with its owner, Isaac Goldstein, who ran the crammed little grocer-shop at the entrance to the Alley.

Mrs. McCann scrubbed the place out thoroughly

for a dollar, one cold night after she had done the Ellwood's washing; Graham Douglas sent up a couple of men from the flour mill to put up a stove; the young ladies of St. Stephen's came down and turned the gloomy vault into a gay paradise of flags and paper flowers, and the place was ready for business.

Mary went out collecting merchandise with Bertha one evening after school. Mr. Evans had brought as much of his old home farm to the town as the new place would accommodate. Among other beloved keepsakes was the old grey horse that had trotted himself and his family to church for twenty years and which his daughter had named the Relic. Bertha and Mary hitched him to the ancient cutter, and went off in great hilarity up and down the streets that had been assigned to them.

"You drive the Relic and I'll gather in the spoils," cried Mary as they began to jog slowly up the hill from the house. It was great fun. The Relic stopped in the middle of the street just whenever he felt so inclined, but ambled persistently on, deaf to entreaties and impervious to the rein, whenever he felt assured that his passengers desired him to stop.

Fortunately almost everyone who had promised a donation for the rummage sale had left it in a box or parcel outside the door, and by putting on speed Mary was often able to dash up to a house, secure

the merchandise and be back in the cutter with it before the Relic had gone many yards.

"Mrs. Kirkwall," said Mary, consulting her list. "That's our last, Miss Jehu. Do you think the Relic's going to stop at her place?"

"We'll just have to wait and see," said Bertha, patiently sawing the Relic's stubborn mouth. "I really haven't the slightest idea."

Evidently he did not consider Mrs. Kirkwall on his calling list for he did not even slacken speed before the big iron gates of Graham Douglas's home. Mary sprang from her seat and sped up the wide, well-swept walk. Katherine Clarkson had made out the lists for the callers, and Mary had a slightly resentful suspicion that she had placed Graham Douglas's name on hers with malicious intent. She was rather glad of an excuse to hurry; it was very near the hour when the master of the house came home for his dinner and she dreaded encountering him, especially in Bertha's presence. She was relieved to see a large pasteboard box, neatly tied, standing in the vestibule. She snatched it up and darted back and away up the street after Bertha, who was still pulling ineffectually at the reins imploring the Relic to stop. Mary jumped in, her prize in her arms, but at this moment the Relic chose to come to a sudden stand, and she was precipitated into the bottom of the cutter.

"He's quite the most outrageously contrary brute! Mary, did you ever see anything so annoying?"

"His self-starter doesn't seem to be working," said Mary, watching his inert bony frame curiously. "It was the brake that was out of order a minute ago. I think you'll have to get all his machinery overhauled."

They got him away at last, with much chirruping and flapping of the lines and shouting of commands.

"It's so much less tiring to walk and carry everything," said the exasperated owner of the Relic, when at last he was put in the stable, "that I can't understand why I ever brought him out."

As the rummage sale was held on a Saturday, Bertha was able to give her help, and she and Mary went down to the warehouse early to lay out their stock. Mary was placed in the men's clothing department, but she did not limit her wares to any particular line of merchandise. She was looking out for the purchaser and was quite conscienceless about the proprietors. Under her own table she slipped away any article that she knew her particular friends ought to buy. Here was a baby's flannel coat that would do Sammy, marked very low, to be sure, but Mary marked it just a little lower. These boots would fit the youngest Carter boy, and those gingham smocks were just made for Lance.

There was a great deal, too, that Mary felt she must warn Sawdust Alley against buying. There

was a leaky coal-oil lamp with long jingling glass pendants hanging from the cracked pink shade which she knew Mrs. LaPlante could not resist once she set her eyes upon it; and several bedraggled chiffon blouses that the eldest Carter girl would pounce upon. There were other things that would scarcely be likely to tempt anyone and that caused Mary to wonder at the point of view of the donors. Mrs. Harding had donated a man's silk hat that must have flourished in the days of the Family Compact, and a feather boa that would have been quite wearable had it not lost all its feathers. There were moth-caten shawls, silk stockings with "ladders" running from heel to hem, a crimson velvet photograph album, a broken electric toaster and a great array of cracked and maimed crockery.

But there were piles of really good and serviceable clothing, nevertheless. Mary found the box from Mrs. Kirkwall so far beyond her expectations that she felt her heart warming towards both that heedless lady and her self-centred nephew. It contained a perfectly good suit of Mr. Douglas's and a handsome light fawn overcoat. Mary was so delighted that she shoved them away under her table lest someone put too high a price upon them.

"Oh, Bertha, there's a perfectly wonderful suit there, and Danny's simply got to have it, if we pay for it ourselves. His mother'll shorten the sleeves and trousers. And old Grandpa Jones must have the

overcoat to go to church in. Don't let anybody see them for the world!"

Another delightful surprise was a large basket Katherine Clarkson brought in from Mrs. Ellwood and displayed with great triumph. It was packed with neatly folded, perfectly-laundered clothing, all in excellent condition, and all of the very best quality.

"I'm ashamed of all the unkind things I've thought about her," Mary murmured contritely, as she and Bertha looked over the display. "She's a dear, generous lady. I wonder if Katherine would let me have that lovely little gingham of Betty's for Annabel McCann. I'm going to ask her."

Katherine was very generous with her prize collection, and also with the prices fixed to them.

"Oh, sell them for anything they'll give," she cried, shoving a wardrobe for the little McCann girls into Mary's hands.

The rummage sale proved a very happy function. Business was brisk and everything was sold, except the silk hat and the toaster, long before the hour for closing. All Sawdust Alley and surrounding neighbourhood came to buy. Mary was overwhelmingly busy. Every one from the Alley came to her and Bertha for advice concerning their purchases. The beautiful suit was handed over to Danny and he walked away with it over his arm in a dazed condition, afraid to speak lest the wonderful thing vanish.

Julie Jones was there, drooping and pale in her black dress, but she went away smiling over the prospect of Grandpa's joy when she showed him the wonderful new overcoat she had bought. Mrs. Ellwood's donation disappeared the first half-hour of the sale and all the purchasers clamoured for more.

Mary was amazed at the number of bedraggled folk with whom she had very little acquaintance.

"There's that dreadful creature they call Shifty Sal," whispered Gertrude Graydon with a shudder. "I simply can't wait on the wicked old thing."

Shifty Sal had a dark, evil face. Her black eyes were bold and defiant as she marched along before the tables. Bertha Evans stepped forward and spoke to her kindly, showing her everything she asked to examine as though she had been Mrs. Kirkwall herself.

"That Evans girl is a lady if ever there was one," declared Mrs. W. J. Clarkson loud enough for her nieces to hear. "I wish she'd give lessons in deportment to some of the young persons of this town who need it badly."

"Poor Aunt Margaret has chilblains again," said Miss Katherine Clarkson. "I know, because she always talks about good manners when her shoes are hurting."

The crowd came and went all day and when the last customer disappeared through the door the tired workers dropped into their seats wearily. Mrs. W.

J. Clarkson came over to the corner where Mary and Bertha were putting away the few remains of their wares. She sank into a chair. "I'm too dead tired to walk up the hill, so I've sent for W. J. to call for me with the cutter. I can take both you girls home if you like."

They thanked her gratefully. "You've worked so hard, Mrs. Clarkson," Bertha said sympathetically, "and you had all the responsibility beside."

"It isn't the work that's made me so tired. It's seeing all those dreadful looking people that came to buy. I've lived in this town all my life and I thought I knew everybody and I didn't dream there were such people here. It's dreadful." Her eyes filled with tears. "I suppose none of them ever go to church."

"None of them come to St. Stephen's anyway," said Mrs. Peterson coming up with a bundle of clothes for the Carters under her arm. "And we ought to be ashamed to confess it."

"Some of our Mothers' Club are going to start in the spring, if they can get clothes," ventured Mary.

"Well, I wish I could help get them ready," cried Mrs. Harding, who had driven down to look in at the sale, but had remained, fascinated. "I can't help feeling that it's wrong to spend so much money on a chime of bells while these people are at our very door."

Mary listened in delighted amazement. The good

women of St. Stephen's had looked for the first time in their comfortable lives upon the fields of labour; fields where the sheaves were rotting and the harvest was likely to be lost.

"Well, we've simply got to do something about it!" cried Mrs. W. J. Clarkson with her accustomed energy. "I'm done with work for those bells until something's done for those poor dirty Carters and Joneses—think of them, without a mother!"

Mary was pressing eagerly forward with a plea for her play-school when the wide door of the store-room was flung open and in hurried one of Mrs. Kirkwall's maids—the elder of the Robinson trollops who came under Mrs. McCann's disapproval. She was very brisk and business-like upon this occasion.

"Say, Mrs. Kirkwall says some o' yous folks must a got a holt o' Mr. Douglas's best suit an' overcoat!" she declared, looking round accusingly from one to the other.

Everyone looked at the President in alarm, all except Mary and Bertha. They looked at each other in dumb horror.

"It's gone somewheres," continued Miss Robinson solemnly. "I put 'em in a box out in the front vestibule for Hobson the cleaner to call for 'em. They was to be cleaned 'count o' Mr. Douglas wantin' them to go to Toronto to-morrow. An' the fella called an' they was gone, an' Mrs. Kirkwall

forgot to put out her stuff for this here rubbish sale and she says she bets they came down here."

"Merciful gracious!" cried Mrs. W. J. "Do any of you girls know anything about it? Kit, who went to Mr. Douglas's?"

"I—we did," gasped Bertha Evans, falling into a chair. "We—*sold* them."

Mary was beyond speech. Before her dazed vision came the picture of Danny as she had seen him last, plodding up the snowy road, looking rather loose and baggy, but consumed with pride, on his way to show himself in all his grandeur to Johnny Petatie! The whole staff of the establishment was crowding around by this time. "Who'd you sell it to?" asked Katherine Clarkson.

"Danny Greeves," whispered Mary. "He's got the suit on now. And old Mr. Jones has the overcoat."

There was an instant's tense silence and the terrible tension was suddenly broken by a shriek of laughter.

"Danny Greeves!" screamed Miss Clarkson, in an agony of mirth. "Oh—oh! Poor Graham's best suit!"

It had been noted frequently of late that the eldest Miss Clarkson was not quite so friendly with Mr. Graham Douglas as of yore, and this blow, dealt by the hand of the young lady he favoured, was entirely to her liking.

It was impossible for the majority of the women not to join her. Graham could well afford to lose a suit. They went off into gales of laughter, in which Miss Robinson joined shamelessly. They were all leaning over the tables wiping their tears, when once more the door was flung hurriedly open, and this time Mrs. McCann came forward, her face full of concern.

She stopped and stared at the laughing, screaming group of women. Mrs. McCann knew them all well, better than some of them could have wished, and she stopped and laughed too in sympathy, her hands on her hips, her jolly face full of wrinkles.

"Well, my land!" she gasped, "yous folks seem to be havin' one good time. But you'll change your tune soon's I tell you somepin'." She grew suddenly grave. "Some o' yous folks has up an' carried off Mrs. Dick Ellwood's last week's wash or I'm mighty mistaken. I took it all home last week, 'count o' Sammy whoopin' so, an' I washed and ironed ivery stitch o' them children's clothes, an' a lovelier lot o' things you never seen. An' I sent my Lantie up with the basket yesterday afternoon, an' he leaves it on the door-step an' rings the bell an' then he skedaddles; an' it seems that that slow trollop of a girl Mrs. Ellwood's got, never went to the door for about an hour after, an' when she did the basket was gone. An' I says, 'Well, I'll bet my

next month's wages,' I says, 'that them rummagers has took it an' sold every last thing!'

This time it was Miss Katherine Clarkson who fell into her chair speechless.

"That lovely basket!" cried Mrs. W. J. "And Kit was so proud of it!"

If the rummage sale committee had been aghast over the first disaster they were like to faint over this one.

Mrs. Dick Ellwood's beautiful lingerie!—She who prided herself on being the best dressed woman in the town and having the best dressed children!—And where was it all now? Scattered to the four winds of Sawdust Alley! Subject to the defiling hands of the little street urchins! Nine out of every ten guilty women listening, remembered having sold some particular treasure of delicate lawn or silk or wool!

It was impossible for gloom to settle long over that gathering. Someone gave an hysterical giggle, it was echoed by a half-strangled laugh, hilarity broke out in another corner, and in a moment they were all caught up in the flood tide of wild mirth. Dire retribution must descend upon them on the morrow. But to-day they must laugh. And so the raftered roof of the old wareroom rang long and gaily to the sounds of this untimely merriment.

"Well," declared Mrs. W. J. Clarkson, wiping her streaming eyes and straightening her hat pre-

paratory to leaving for home, "we may as well stop this and go and prepare for our funerals. They'll be announced to-morrow in church. And this is the funeral of a chime of bells for St. Stephen's too, let me tell you that. We'll have to spend the rest of our lives raising money to pay for a suit for Graham Douglas and clothes for the Ellwood youngsters!"

CHAPTER XX

SPRINGTIME

THERE had been many stirring events in the long history of St. Stephen's, but it is to be doubted if any one occurrence produced such a commotion as the disastrous mistakes attending the rummage sale. The town fairly buzzed with the excitement. The telephone lines rested neither day nor night as they shot hither and thither the dire news to those who had not been present at the sale. Mrs. Harding forgot her medicine for a whole day and two families of the Clarksons who had been on unfriendly terms all winter laid aside their rivalries and jealousies and became intimate again over the discussion as to what Mrs. Ellwood was going to do about the theft of her clothes.

What Graham Douglas would do seemed to be a foregone conclusion. He would hate losing a good suit and overcoat they all agreed, for Graham had a good deal of his old father's frugality under all his apparent generosity; but, of course, he could do nothing but treat the matter as a joke, especially as Mary Erskine was the one in fault.

Mary, herself, was not so sure of this. She had

a vivid recollection of his exclamation of annoyance when she steered his yacht awry. Not that she was afraid of his wrath; she rather enjoyed the thought of it. She had a fierce satisfaction in the thought that she had robbed him of a suit and given it to Danny Greeves.

"I know how Robin Hood felt when he stole from the rich and gave to the poor," she said to Bertha as they plodded home together. "And I think he did quite right."

"Robin Hood must apologise to the rich man, though, Mary," Bertha said gently. "A word of explanation from you will make it all right."

"No, I couldn't treat the matter seriously enough. I'd laugh. You explain, Bertha; there's a dear. You've known him so much longer than I have."

Bertha's face, under the electric light, looked tired and wan. She shook her head. "One word from you would have more influence, even if you did laugh."

Mary caught the look of wistful sadness that often surprised her in her friend's serene eyes. She had a sudden determination. She would make Bertha go to him and explain. It was one of Mary's sudden, headlong impulses, born of a wild, unreasoning hope. Bertha was not easy to persuade, but she yielded finally, convinced that a dread of offending him was Mary's motive, and willing to save her friend at some pain to herself.

She found, as she feared, that Graham was an-

noyed. He hated to be made the butt of a joke and all Wawashene was laughing at him. Dr. Peterson made that fact very plain to him and also saw to it that the laughter was loud and continuous.

Bertha Evans's gentle apology was as salve to his irritated feelings. He detained her longer in his office than the delivering of the apology required. He had scarcely spoken to Bertha since their school-days, when they were boy and girl sweethearts. They lived in the same little town and attended the same church, but their social circles did not touch. They slipped unconsciously into talk of old times when they both went to school to old Johnny Petatie and had to memorise the 119th Psalm.

"I suppose," he said, as she rose to leave, "that you will look upon this calamity to me as a sort of retribution. If I had sent Danny to school as you wanted me to, he'd have been an M. P. or a professor by now, and I'd have had my Sabbath suit."

She flushed at the mocking tone. "I don't take quite such a narrow view of life as that; but whatever interpretation one puts on it, the fact cannot be altered that,—that if Danny had had a chance——"

"Well, well, don't let's quarrel over him again," he said hastily. "We'll see who was right, some day yet."

Bertha Evans went away with a feeling of great relief that the ordeal was over. Fortunately Mary

had not guessed what a task she had set her. Nevertheless she would have been very happy if she could have known how far reaching her little scheme was to become.

Mr. Douglas treated the loss of his suit with charming good-humour when next he called at the manse.

"It was all my fault," Mary stammered; "and if I could have got it back again I would, but Danny put the suit on right away and——"

It was impossible for Mary to keep a twinkle out of her eye, brought there by the remembrance of Danny, hiding under his mother's bed and bawling out that he'd never part with the suit if they murdered him in it.

"You must not mention it again," Graham Douglas said. "It doesn't matter in the least. My good Aunt is always leaving me bereft of my wardrobe, so you see I'm used to it."

"I'm treated just the same, Graham," said Dr. Sutherland. "I'm nervous every Sunday morning until I find my gown hanging in the closet. I always have the fear that Mary has given it to Mrs. McCann for a dress."

"I never thought of that; I'm so glad you suggested it," said Mary gratefully.

Graham Douglas's smile was not just what the little pleasantries might have provoked.

"The dear ladies are so in earnest about these

charitable campaigns," he said, turning to his minister, "that it is really wrong to laugh at them. I'm thankful they've got this one off their minds before the spring work opens up. All this fuss and attention is really bad for the men, makes them feel that they're ill-used and down-trodden. I always find trouble in the mills for a couple of weeks after St. Stephen's has had a charitable outburst. Fortunately they don't take one often."

"The trouble is that we have not made a common-sense study of poverty, its causes and cures," Dr. Sutherland said soothingly; but Mary was too angry to speak. She knew that cold, half-disdainful, half-amused air of his would chill the new atmosphere of enthusiasm for Sawdust Alley that the rummage sale had produced.

She soon found her suspicions correct. Mrs. W. J. Clarkson had been consulting W. J. and he felt it would not be wise to do anything aggressive at present; and after all, it seemed too bad to start raising money for the chimes and then not finish. Reports from other quarters were the same. Graham Douglas was the master of St. Stephen's and he decreed that she should leave Sawdust Alley to its own devices. Mrs. Kirkwall gave a tea to celebrate the doings at the rummage sale and the woes of the dwellers on the Mill Flats were reviewed with much good-natured laughter. Little Miss Erskine was a dear girl, every one conceded, but she would soon

get over her romantic notions. Graham would see to that. And now, what about hiring the Opera House and getting up another concert for the bell fund?

"It's all Graham Douglas's fault!" raged Mary. "He has his hand on everything in the church, and he keeps it paralysed. I hate him, and I'll tell Uncle John I do——"

But Uncle John looked so pleased the next afternoon when the smart team and cutter stopped at the gate that Mary's heart failed her. Graham Douglas came up to the door full of high good humour. They must all come for a drive to-day. It might be their last chance. The roads were breaking up already, but they could have a splendid run up by the river. And Mary smothered her righteous indignation and went.

Spring came to Wawashene late, but this year it came with a miraculous suddenness. It seemed as though one day the streets were flooded with snowy water, and fires blazed in every furnace; the next, green grass was smiling from the wet lawns and the robins were trilling a joyous chorus from the budding tree tops.

Sawdust Alley lay for weeks, half-submerged, like a little Venice, and great was the joy of Lance and his followers and wonderful their adventures by gondola and bridge. The melted snow disclosed a ghastly array of mounds in each back yard, built

up of the last winter's potato-peelings and tea-leaves and ashes and other refuse, cemented together with ice. Mary and Bertha had encouraged much planting of bulbs the autumn before and so there was an unusual cleaning up of back yards. Danny was rewarded by a row of purple and gold crocuses around his little house, a sight that sent him into ecstasies even beyond the miraculous new grey suit which he now wore so proudly to Sunday School at the farm.

The wet streets and the flooded cellars had made Mrs. Greeves suffer more than usual, and when Mary's little pupils had been carried home through the mud she went into the little island home to sit with the invalid. Danny's housekeeping was not just such as Mrs. McCann could approve of; but there was always some blundering attempt at beauty in his efforts. He had been to the swamp and brought home a handful of pussy-willows, which, with one tiny pink fuschia, made a spot of life and colour in the poor little room.

Mary sat down beside the sufferer and tried haltingly to bring her some of that assurance of a Father's love that sustained Mrs. Hill through long days of weakness.

"Oh, indeed, Miss Erskine, I know all about religion," she broke in reassuringly. "As I often say to Dr. Sutherland when he calls, I'm thankful I was brought up good and went to church and Sunday school and everything. Ma, she was brought up a

Methodist, but Pa was a stiff Presbyterian, and I tell you we were all brought up right. And I've brought up Danny to know what's what too. Pa always said youngsters should know the Catechism and they'd turn out all right. But, dear me, it's a strange thing to me to see how many St. Stephen's folks that call themselves Christians can go on playin' cards an' dancin' an' goin' on. I never yet could see how folks that's church members——"

Mary tried to steer the conversation to a more genial subject, but in vain. Mrs. Greeves was on her favourite theme.

"Take them Clarksons, now," she continued. "There's Mrs. W. J. herself—she was a Greeves, so she was, and a full cousin to my husband's father. I guess you didn't know that, and her actin' so bigitty."

"It's very nice that you're related," Mary said soothingly. "Mrs. Clarkson seems to be a very kind lady."

Mrs. Greeves stopped her with a gesture of disdain.

"Her kind! Don't you talk to me about Maggie Greeves! Maggie's forgotten where she came from, I tell you. Indeed, I never have a thing to do with her," she continued haughtily. "Not a thing. I very rarely mention the relationship. Just look at her, now. Goin' to card parties, Mrs. McCann tells me, in the middle of the afternoon, mind you; sittin'

down to a table with her hat on an' playin' cards! And then in the summer time she goes to that place they call the Country Club and goes knockin' a little white ball up and down the grass. You may not believe me, Miss Erskine, but them's the kind o' things that's goin' on all the time in this town. I don't know what the world's comin' to, I'm sure. I'm thankful I was brought up religious, anyhow, and I stuck to it!"

This was only another evidence of the dark heathenism of Sawdust Alley with which Mary found herself so unable to cope.

"And if they'd done right by my Danny he wouldn't be what he is to-day," Mrs. Greeves continued, looking fondly at him, as he lumbered about the little kitchen, talking happily to himself. "Miss Evans asked them and Graham Douglas to take Danny to some sort of school and teach him, after his Pa was killed, but indeed you wouldn't get a cent out of any of them. They promised, but I knew they wouldn't."

There seemed no hope of the talk coming to an end, so Mary was forced to leave in the middle of it.

"You'll be sure to keep the fire going, won't you, Danny," she warned.

"Yes, yes," he promised, nodding his big head vigorously. "The logs is all comin' down soon. They'd make a grand fire, wouldn't they? If they were all to ketch fire at once wouldn't it be a fine

blaze? Maw'd get better then." Mary smiled indulgently and went up the hills to the dry streets and trim gardens.

She crossed Main Street which was crowded with farmers' wagons, buggies and cars; it was the hour for starting homeward. Mary always experienced a pleasant sociable feeling on the Main Street of Wawashene. Everybody came down town at about four o'clock and met in the post-office or the ice-cream parlour; farmers' wives visited in the middle of the sidewalk, or in store doorways, and the butcher shouted across the street to the baker to ask how business was going. This afternoon the street was in a pleasant bustle. Mr. McArthur, the elder, in his white apron was piling the purchases of a farmer's wife into the back of her buggy, while she was engaged in a discussion regarding the hour to start home with her young daughter who was standing on the balcony of the hotel just above. Farther down the street Mr. Austin, in the doorway of the furniture store, called across to Mary to ask how Sunday School went last Sunday and to express his regrets at being absent.

Mary went on happily. Spring was in the air, a robin was trilling forth the news from the top of the elm tree that shaded the Petersons' lawn, and a row of tiny green fingers showed where Mrs. Peterson's hyacinths were coming out to greet the sun.

Mrs. Peterson herself was enjoying the sunshine,

seated in the old muddy buggy before the house reading a book. She called to Mary.

"Come up and sit with me for five minutes, my dear, I've been waiting here quite an hour for the Doctor, and I'm likely to wait another unless I go in and get my supper before I go." She laughed good-naturedly. Mrs. Peterson was accustomed to waiting. The Doctor liked her to go with him, especially on his long drives into the country, and she made it her boast that in twenty-five years he had never been delayed by her five minutes. So, immediately upon his stentorian call from the foot of the stair,— "All aboard!" she was out and into her seat. But the Doctor was not so punctual. As soon as his wife was ready the telephone or a patient would immediately demand attention. Sometimes a second patient would drop in before number one had been sent away, and the lady would still hold her place patiently, while her daughter would bring her out a book or a piece of sewing. Sometimes the proposed trip had to be cancelled altogether, and she would descend after an hour of waiting and re-enter the house, saying cheerfully as she removed her hat, "Well, I've had a very pleasant airing, anyway."

She often had a pleasant visit with a passing friend, too, and some days she held quite a reception, seated enthroned while her friends stood around her.

Mary had had a tiring hour with the babies of Sawdust Alley and was glad of the invitation to sit

down. She ran forward and climbed up beside her.

"You've been down to your little school, you dear girl," she said. "I am so glad that you have interested Dorothy and Lila. Put the robe over your knees, the breeze from the lake is always chilly till the ice goes out. And how is Mrs. Greeves to-day?"

"She's got so much religion that I don't think she has strength to carry it," sighed Mary. "I'm afraid I'm no use to 'deal with souls' as Uncle John says. Did you ever talk to her about church?"

"Yes, poor creature, and there is no darker heathen in Africa, be it said to our shame. I often wonder what the judgment of St. Stephen's will be when the Master of us all counts up those under our very shadow who really know nothing of Him?"

"I think half the members wouldn't care if the church was shut up," burst out Mary. "Well, I suppose they would really think it was dreadful if it was but they won't do anything to keep it open."

"I think we will have to get back to the Puritan days," said Mrs. Peterson. "Life has been made easy for us, and we want our religion to be the nice pleasant sort that isn't too much trouble."

"It isn't that the girls mind work," said Mary honestly, "but they won't work all together. There are so many little sets——"

"There! You've put your finger on the sore spot. The church is shackled by woman's fear for her social position. We'll never do anything worth while in

this world, we women, till we get over what Ruskin calls 'coming down off our pedestals to play at precedence with our neighbours'."

The elder woman put her hand on the girl's gently. "There's just one thing will cure our ills, my dear," she said softly, "and that is prayer. When I get discouraged and impatient with the world and all its ways I just go up the river and have a visit with the Hills. The spiritual atmosphere where they live is purer and rarer. And I learn every time that Johnny Petatie's secret is communion with his Father. We must learn that lesson, too, and some day the bells of St. Stephen's will ring out such a peal that the town will be full of music."

Mary went home with a fresh hope in her heart. Mrs. Peterson had shown her a new side of her character. She had heretofore known her as a kind, pleasant, practical woman, who spent her life in whole hearted service to her family and the church. But to-day she had discovered gracious depths in her character. She felt heartened, encouraged, and a good deal humbled. In her headlong youthful ambition she had thought she could do with her own hands that which needed Divine power. Uncle John was right, as he always was, and more things were wrought by prayer than anyone in St. Stephen's had yet dreamed of.

In a few days Danny's prophecy concerning the

logs came true. One bright windy morning the ice swept away in glittering chains, leaving a clear blue expanse of lake and river. The logs came down from the camps like an invading host and took possession of the river and spread far out into the lake. Sawdust Alley awoke from its winter lethargy. The great mill bestirred itself from its long sleep, and like a hungry monster swallowed the logs as fast as they could be shoved into his great mouth, roaring and screaming for more.

Mary found herself rather enjoying the stir of the mills, the sweet scent of the new-sawn lumber, the sight of the men and boys, her old friends, coming laughing from their work.

On the first Saturday that the mud had dried sufficiently to make gardening possible, she begged the afternoon of Peter and together they went down to Sawdust Alley determined to make a place of beauty out of Mrs. McCann's back yard. The children were waiting for her with brooms and hoes and rakes borrowed from Johnny Petatie, and while Annabel and Gwennie and Geraldine swept and tidied, and Lancelot piled the wood in a corner, Peter dug a flower bed all along the fence and in the narrow strip between the house and the side-walk. Then they planted seeds, an operation which kept the children breathless with excitement,—sweet pease, and nasturtiums out at the front, hollyhocks

along the side fence, and sunflowers around the wood pile.

"Now if you and Danny will move the woodpile into the shed," Mary cried radiantly, "and clear away the chips, we'll have a lovely lawn all next summer for our school."

Peter had become quite interested. "Say, Molly, you're funny," he declared, leaning his weary frame against the wood-shed. "I don't see where you get all the fun out of a job like this."

"I get it there," said Mary, pointing to Sammy, who was making a wonderful mill out of chips and sawdust at her feet; "and there"—she indicated Lance who was hammering joyously at the rickety back steps, mending a broken board with great pride.

Peter nodded. He had a generous boy-heart, and it caught something of Mary's joy of service.

"I s'pose it's better than goin' to a lot o' silly pink teas," he said, and added, after a moment's thought, "I might help with the kids on Saturdays. I mean the bigger boys, playing baseball or something."

No despised prophet with his first convert felt more joy than did Mary over this declaration.

"Oh, Peter, you're a perfect gold mine. If you'd only show these boys how to play! Why, they never have a really, truly game, they don't know how to go about it. They just quarrel and fight all

the time. Perhaps," she cried, with a sudden inspiration, "some of the boys of Dr. Peterson's class would help you."

"I'll help too," cried Lancelot, coming up with his hammer and saw. "I'll make the kids behave for you, Pete."

"Of course you will!" cried Mary. "You're going to show the fellows how to play fair; that's the first thing to learn before a boy can be a man."

"You gotta learn to make money, too," said Lance, shrewdly. "When I get big I'm gonta own a mill and have a car like Mr. Douglas," he added, his ambition fired by the sight of a long, dull-blue car that was coming up the road from the mill office.

"Oh, no, no, Lance!" cried Mary in alarm. "You mustn't say that. The brave old knights didn't think about money. They just rode around and looked after people who were in trouble. I don't want my knight to be rich."

The boy looked up at her, wonder in his solemn brown eyes, and Peter regarded his sister with a new interest.

"I won't if you don't want me to," declared Lance. "But why don't you? Ain't it nice to be rich, like him?"

He nodded towards the driver of the approaching car. There was no chance to answer. It had already stopped beside them. "May I take you two home?" Graham Douglas asked genially, throwing open the

car door, and motioning Mary to the seat beside him. Mary pretended not to see. She bade the children good-bye and sprang into the back seat beside Peter. Graham Douglas was in a high good-humour that could not be disturbed. His mills were running at top speed, business had never been better. He leaned back, his hand resting easily on the wheel, and delivered over his shoulder a description of his latest deal in lumber, and its enormous profits. Mary listened without interest. She did not even understand the language of business and missed the meaning of much that he said.

Peter reclined luxuriously against the cushions. "Say, Molly," he remarked, when their host's attention was diverted by the busy crossing of Main Street. "You were talking a lot of stuff to that poor McCann kid. It's all right to be rich, you bet. You girls aren't goin' to make me stick at school all my life. I don't intend to go to college and be a highbrow. I'm going into some business where you can make a pile, and I'm goin' to have a car and everything some day."

"Oh, Pete!" cried Mary on the verge of tears; but Graham Douglas, who had caught some of Peter's outburst, turned and laughed encouragingly.

"Good for you! That's the way I like to hear a young fellow talk. You've got some ambition. A university course rather spoils a young man for

business. When you want a paying job, come to me."

Mary was miserably silent for the rest of the ride. Poor Uncle John's rosiest dream was that Peter should some day be a minister, and Aunt Effie's that he be a successor to Duncan Sinclair. Was the master of St. Stephen's going to put his paralysing hand on this high ambition also?

Peter found his lessons extremely difficult that evening. Spring was in the air and money-making schemes were in his head. Both Helen and their uncle were out for the evening, and Mary sat with him trying to assist him through a Latin Slough of Despond where she floundered almost as deeply as he did. They had come out of it to engage in a hot debate on business versus a university degree, when Helen returned from dinner at the Costly Clarksons. She was radiant.

Did they hear the wonderful news? The Governor General and his wife were actually going to stop for an afternoon at Wawashene on their trans-continental tour! His Lordship was to visit the Mills and take a trip up the river to see the dam and the new power house, and her Ladyship was to be entertained at tea in the town. And everybody was crazy about it. Mrs. W. J. Clarkson had invited some of the leading people to tea the next afternoon to plan for it. "And we're both invited,

Mary, just think of that. We'll be presented to the Governor General's wife."

Mary was rather impressed. But she was not enthusiastic over the tea.

"Why did they invite us? The older women will be making all the plans. That's the third tea we've been asked to in a week! 'By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world'," she quoted laying down "The Merchant of Venice" which was awaiting Peter's attention.

"I might reply like Nerissa," said her sister smiling. "'They are sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing.' You wouldn't like it at all if we were left out of everything."

"Yes I would. I'm certainly surfeited with teas and receptions. You can just go and telephone Mrs. W. J. that I won't be there. I feel sure I'm going to have an unbreakable engagement tomorrow. There!" She sprang up as the telephone rang. "I'll answer that, and if it's an invitation to a tea, I'll scream like Betty Ellwood did at Mrs. Graydon's invitation to Sunday School, 'No! I hate you! I won't go!'"

She ran down stairs, but it was some time before she returned, and even Peter, hanging over the banister, could not hear what she was saying.

When at last Mary came slowly up the stairs, her eyes were shining and her cheeks were pink. She

stood in the doorway trying ineffectually to keep her dimples from showing.

“ ‘Oh my prophetic soul,’ I knew I was going to have an engagement for to-morrow !” she announced, and fled to her room refusing to explain.

CHAPTER XXI

MAY-DAYS

WHEN Mary and Peter had been on one expedition up the river in David Hunter's canoe, and another out beyond the islands, and finally, when Mary had been out for a paddle with David alone, and all in one week, Helen became alarmed. So, when her sister asked her to help her and Bertha with a picnic out to Heron Island for the little folks of her play-school, Helen sacrificed an important meeting to arrange for the vice-regal tea. Mary needed her help worse than she realised, was Helen's opinion.

She had begun to hope that her sister was realising her great good fortune. Indeed Helen had comforted herself with the assurance that no girl in her senses could resist such a dazzling opportunity, and now it would appear that everything was to be spoiled by this strange young man from the backwoods.

As she had feared, David Hunter was the head and front of the picnic. He owned an old gasoline launch, which had lain all winter in his boat house,

and with rapturous assistance from Peter he conveyed the merry-makers down the river, past the noisy, smoking mills and the floating logs, away around the sandy point and out into the breezes of the blue lake to the little island.

Meanwhile Billy Coles was detailed to paddle the three young ladies over with the basket of provisions, and here was David Hunter's canoe awaiting them; a beautiful, new, shining craft of infinite grace that seem as though, like Hiawatha's Cheemaun,

"All the forest's life was in it,
All its mystery and magic."

Heron island was carpeted thickly with blue violets, and the little fringe of woods surrounding it was starred with white trilliums and wake-robins. It was a perfect sunny silver-misted May day, the air heavy with the perfume of wild cherry blossoms. The little prisoners of Sawdust Alley ran about, mad with the rapture of unlimited flowers, and Mrs. McCann, off for her first holiday since her husband's death, sat with her lap full of moss and jack-in-the-pulpits and marigolds, and laughed till she cried at the sight of Sammy and Annabel rolling round on the grass in convulsions of joy.

Helen might have been as happy as any of them had she not felt that Mary seemed too happy and that David Hunter was too conspicuous. He man-

aged everything, from seeing that the bold Lancelot did not lead a swimming party into the chill waters, to preparing the supper.

He and Bertha Evans seemed to be on the most intimate terms.

"What's this ridiculous thing you've brought?" he asked opening her basket. "Oh, horrible! A thermos bottle in the bush! It'll make the tea taste of upholstered furniture, when it might have the flavour of maple smoke."

"David Hunter," declared Bertha rescuing her precious utensil, "you've become positively uncivilised since the days when we went to Sunday school picnics and sat up nice and good at a white table-cloth."

"And you've deteriorated dreadfully since the days when we stole turnips from Walt Carter's field behind the school and made a dinner out of them."

Then he and Mary seemed to make so many references and mysterious allusions to past experiences.

As they sat around the fire after a luxurious supper, the tea having been made in the proper way over the fire, Peter, lying on the ground in gorged contentment, expressed the wish that they could all be shipwrecked on this Treasure Island and never get off it again.

"What do you say, Miss Erskine?" asked David Hunter. "A specialist in shipwrecks ought to be able to give sound advice."

"I'd spoil it," answered Mary mysteriously. "I always manage to get thoroughly rescued."

There were strange allusions, too, to the Ivory Palace, and when David Hunter remarked solemnly that Shakespeare meant Mary's little birch grove when he talked about tongues in trees, Helen thought it was really improper of Mary to laugh so, as though there were some hidden meaning in it all. David Hunter was altogether too attractive, and Mary entirely too familiar with him. What had become of all her shyness?

When they were safely at home Helen ventured to remonstrate.

"Mary, dear, when did you meet that Mr. Hunter first?" she enquired nervously.

"Oh, last summer," answered Mary, with an air of innocence that did not deceive her sister. "Why?"

"You seem to know him so very well, and you both made so many allusions to the past to-day, as though you had grown up together."

"Well, you see he knows Sawdust Alley so well," Mary said evasively. "He was brought up just next door to it, so to speak."

"I hope you don't get too familiar with him, dear. I don't like the way he—he seems to take things for granted. He knows Bertha well, of course, as they went to school together, but it's different with us,

and—you mustn't—you must remember your position."

Mary laughed aloud at this, and danced away. She was too happy to be dragged into an argument, but she left her sister very much disturbed. Mary seemed utterly lacking in a sense of the fitness of things or she would surely realise that any young woman who had been exalted to the height of Graham Douglas's special notice could never stoop to receive attentions from a young man of absolutely no social position.

Helen had but one comfort, that the young man's week of business in town was almost over and they would likely see no more of him that summer.

But she found, to her dismay, that she had another member of the family to reckon with. Whatever doubt there might be about Mary's feelings for the young woodsman, there was none regarding Peter's. He had fallen in love, completely and overwhelmingly, with David Hunter, and could talk of no one else. The young engineer's tales of life in the wilderness had seized the boy's imagination till he was wild to be away with him. He followed David Hunter about until, at parting, he gained an invitation to come up north with him and spend part of his summer vacation. He could give him work in his camp during July, and if they did not move too far away, he might keep him longer.

Peter came home with the great news, as though

he had been presented with the Wawa timber limits, instead of being invited to work in them all summer. Helen discouraged the plan. It would only increase Mary's interest in the objectionable young man to have Peter with him; besides, Peter's manners had been improving somewhat, since coming to Wawashene, and he would lose completely what little polish he had gained if allowed to go off to the back woods. But her objections were drowned in the unanimous agreement of the rest of the family. Mary was enthusiastic, and Dr. Sutherland was almost equally so. It would be a splendid thing for the boy in his long vacation, he declared, and he did not know anyone he would rather Peter would be with than David Hunter. No youth could come to any harm with David as a companion.

Mary's eyes shone with gratitude over this high praise. "Oh, Uncle John," she cried, when they were alone together after it had all been settled, "I can't tell you how glad I am about Pete. I was so afraid to have him around here idle all holidays. So many of the boys here have too much money, and they—he gets so many treats——" She paused; she could not confess that she had been growing afraid of Graham Douglas's influence. Too often she had heard her brother express unbounded admiration for the man who had made so much money, and a longing for just such a launch and car.

"Yes, yes, it will be better for him to be away

from town," Dr. Sutherland said. "We shall miss the boy; but a town is not a good place for an idle lad. I had always hoped that we could create a spirit in St. Stephen's among our boys that would safe-guard them and give them a taste for better things. But Dr. Peterson is the only one who seems to take any interest, and he is so busy. Eh, Mary, child, wealth is not always a blessing to a church. Yes, Peter will be much better away."

Helen had little time to worry over either her brother or sister, for stirring events were shaking the social life of Wawashene to its foundations.

The whole town as one man had undertaken the great task of entertaining the Governor General, but all their preparations were as nothing to the tremendous efforts of the ladies to entertain the "Governess," as Tom Cringan, the Mayor, persisted in calling the first lady of the land. The burning question which agitated everyone was who should have the great honour of being hostess? Everyone agreed that it must be someone with a spacious drawing-room containing the finest Chesterfield couch, phonograph, and rose-shaded lamp available. There were several that came up to the requirements. Mrs. Kirkwall, Mrs. Harding, each branch of the Clarkson family, and Mrs. Ellwood were all eligible as hostesses, so far as equipment went. But, as Mrs. W. J. Clarkson pointed out privately to a few select friends, Mrs. Kirkwall had

no manners and would laugh and talk in a loud voice and the town would be disgraced. Mrs. Harding would never do, either, for she would be sure to take a fit of nerves and have to go to bed at the last moment. Then there was Mrs. Dick Ellwood, but as Katherine Clarkson said it seemed ridiculous to have anyone but some member of the Clarkson family in such a conspicuous position. The Governor General himself must know that Wawashene would be only a little backwoods village without the business of the Douglas and Clarkson firm, and Mrs. Dick Ellwood had made herself very unpleasant since the mistake of the rummage sale, sending her children to the Anglican Sunday school even.

The final conclusion of a great deal of talk was that it seemed clear to everyone that a Clarkson's drawing-room must be chosen for the great event. Very bitterly did Mrs. W. J. repent of the years she had refused the burden of housekeeping and compelled her husband to board. To be sure their boarding house had always been expensive and exclusive but, at best, it was no place to entertain the mistress of Rideau Hall. Mrs. W. J. still held her position as head of the reigning house, however, and had just decreed that Mrs. Harold, as being the smartest and most up-to-date of her sisters-in-law, should be the chosen one for the high office, when a bomb was flung into the midst of the well laid plans and the whole social fabric was in flames.

Without consulting anyone, without even calling a meeting, and just when Mrs. Harold Clarkson was starting to Toronto to buy new curtains, the Mayor announced at a Council meeting that the home of Mrs. Richard Ellwood had been chosen for the reception to the "Governess." Everyone knew just exactly how it had been worked. Dick Ellwood and Tom Gringan were partners in some lumber business. Mrs. Ellwood was revenged for the loss of her children's wardrobe.

Before the town could recover from the shock the distinguished visitors had come and gone. Mrs. Ellwood made a charming hostess, the great lady as charming a guest. Bobby and Betty, dressed like fairies, and looking more like angels than ever, presented the visitor with a sheaf of roses larger than themselves; and she kissed and caressed them and was so delighted with their beauty and their lovely manners that no one else had a chance to be noticed at all.

But the slight to the Clarksons was unpardonable. Mrs. W. J. made it very plain to the usurper that she had overstepped the boundary. The clan rallied to their chieftainess and society in Wawashene was rent asunder. Mrs. Harding joined the usurper, compelling Mrs. Kirkwall to go with her, and the association that was pledged to place a chime of bells in the tower of St. Stephen's church fell asunder and disappeared in a clash of discords.

CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF THE DREAM

WITH all the family against her Helen was forced to yield, and Peter prepared to start for the backwoods as soon as school closed for the summer vacation. She felt, however, that she must give him a sisterly warning regarding the company he would meet.

"You must be careful not to grow too familiar and chummy with any of the men, Peter dear," she said, as she superintended his packing. "They will all likely be so rough——"

"Oh, Dave Hunter's all the company I want," was the rather disconcerting answer. "I'd rather chum it with him than anybody I know. Say,—Nell."

"Yes, dear."

"Do you—didn't you think when he was home, that he was kind of stuck on Molly?"

"Oh, Peter, dear, what a crude way of expressing it! I certainly hope not. It would be very unfortunate, because——"

"Because what?"

"Why, you must know yourself, dear—no, don't

put those boots on top of your clean shirts—you can't help seeing that Mary—that there's someone else who has a prior claim."

Peter stood for a few moments staring at his sister, and then gave a long whistle. "Oh, ho, the Wawa-shene Mills, eh? I thought she didn't like him."

"Oh, I think she feels differently about him now. But of course we mustn't say anything about it—yet. But you can see how dreadful it would be if Mr. Hunter had any such notions as you suggest. I hope for his own sake he has not."

Peter did not think it worth while to uphold his friend's cause. He considered all love affairs exceedingly silly, and dismissed the foolish subject airily.

"Oh, well, it'll be nice for Molly, if she gets that big launch. Say, where did you put my blue tie? I can't live without it."

Peter departed for the northern wilderness the day his examinations were finished; departed like a young Columbus going out to discover new continents. He was to take the train to a little station up in the forest where David Hunter was to meet him. Mary had difficulty keeping the tears back. Peter was so high-spirited, so anxious to be away, but he was her little brother and she had never been parted from him; and he was so young to be sent out into the world.

She found her chief comfort in the fact that he

would be away from Graham Douglas's influence. Under the spell of David Hunter Peter seemed to have forgotten that there was such a thing as successful business in the world.

"Davy will take care of him," old Johnny Petatie had assured her many times, in the past month, and it was good to remember that now.

"God bless the dear boy," said Dr. Sutherland, as they walked home from the station. "He will be a fine man yet, never fear, Mary, child. He'll be in good hands this summer and we must just pray that David will guide him into the footsteps of the One who made a man of the first Peter."

The oldest inhabitant of Wawashene, so said both the town's weekly papers, could not remember even hearing his grandfather tell of such a dry summer. All the long July days the sun blazed down on the hot streets of the little town, and the parched grass along the dusty highways. The drooping trees and the thirsty gardens and lawns lost their freshness and grew brown and burnt. Every afternoon clouds gathered overhead, with a promise of refreshment to the patient, waiting earth; but while the anxious farmers watched them, up sprang a hot wind from the east and away sped the mocking phantom.

Though the farmers and gardeners suffered, the dry season proved a most profitable one to the Costly Clarksons and all the other young people of St. Stephen's who spent the summer in pleasure-seeking.

There had never been so many visitors from the cities since Wawashene became a summer resort. Never had the hotels and boarding houses been so overflowing, nor the cottages along the shore, and never had there been such a blossoming of white tents all over the islands. There were tennis parties in the morning, picnics to shady groves in the afternoon and canoeing parties in the evening. Helen and Mary were invited to so many that the latter grew rebellious.

"I don't think one ought to be expected to go to more than forty picnics in a week, do you, Uncle John?" she complained. "Life's nothing but one huge ham sandwich devoured on the lake shore, and with too much mustard on it."

So she decided that if she must go to picnics every day and all day she was going where and with whom she liked. There could not be time for so much pleasure-seeking in the life of one with the spirit of Mary Erskine. Down on Sawdust Alley, though the cellars were dry for the first time in their history, the dust and heat were intolerable. The hot little houses never seemed so dirty and uncomfortable. All the brave little gardens withered away, and even Danny's sweet peas, which he had tended so carefully, hung like war-scarred little banners in the black coal dust. So Mary took her picnics in a new direction and twice a week, she and Bertha gathered all the children of the Alley and as many

of the discouraged mothers as could come and, with Johnny Petatie as guide, they went off up to the woods along the river bank to breathe the fresh air and let the little folk cool themselves in the water.

When the good folk of St. Stephen's were not too busy they sometimes helped with these excursions; but all the people who had leisure for such things had moved to their summer homes on the lake shore and were caught up in a mad riot of picnics of their own.

The church was very quiet. Everyone seemed to have forgotten the bells; all the missionary societies disbanded for the summer; and Mr. Foster had great difficulty in getting teachers for his Sunday-school classes. Mary was alone for a month with the primary class, but it was not such an arduous task since the little Ellwoods had mercifully been removed.

Mary missed Peter sorely, and not only for the help he would have given in managing Lance and the other bigger boys. The brother and sister had never been separated before, and life seemed very dull and empty without Peter's teasing. There was another reason why the days seemed long and lonely and the picnics dull. Mary would not have confessed it even to herself, but the lack of letters from the North was troubling her greatly. Peter wrote every week, long, scrawled letters full of the new wonders of life in the wilderness; but one formal

note had been all that David had written. Perhaps he was too busy, Mary told herself, but the many-paged, closely written letters that his mother was always proudly displaying contradicted her. There was something wrong, and that something robbed the gay, sunny, summer days of all their brightness.

It was a relief to her when August came and her Uncle's vacation made it possible to get away. Dr. Peterson took his family for a trip up the broad, blue expanse of the Great Lakes and as Peter refused to think of coming home, Mary and her Uncle accompanied them. Helen was invited to join a party chaperoned by Mrs. Harding to a Muskoka hotel. Mrs. Harding always recovered her health and spirits in the gay summer season, and was as young and strong and ready for picnics as the Costly Clarksons themselves.

Graham Douglas called to say good-bye and in spite of some deep plotting on Mary's part to avoid it, he placed his car at the disposal of the family and insisted upon driving them to the station. He looked after their baggage with a proprietary air, and Mrs. Peterson whispered to her husband that Graham's manner of handing Dr. Sutherland on board the train was almost that of a son. Mary tried to efface herself between the two girls, dreading a private leave-taking. The young man saw her little scheme, and smiled to himself. Graham Douglas was not naturally conceited, but the young ladies

of Wawashene had long been teaching him that he was exceedingly desirable, and it was impossible that no part of the lesson should have taken effect. He never once suspected that Mary's avoidance of him was anything but a pretty shyness. It made her all the more alluring, and often set him to searching her out at a gathering just for the pleasure of seeing her try to hide. So when he found her seated in the train with Lila between her and the aisle he came up behind her, and leaning over the back of the seat whispered:

"Won't you drop me a letter and tell me how you and the Doctor are getting on?" It was a satisfaction to see the rose colour growing deeper in Mary's cheek.

"Oh, no, I'm afraid I couldn't," she cried hastily. "I—I never write letters when I'm away on holidays," she added, saying anything that came into her head in her embarrassment.

"I can't quite believe that. Dr. Sutherland used to tell me that you wrote charming letters. He used to read me bits from them and they make me want to have one of my own. How about a picture postcard then?"

"I—I'll get Uncle John to write you one," she answered in tremulous haste. "Oh, Lila, have you my hand bag? I don't know what in the world I did with it!"

As the handbag was discovered amid much laugh-

ter to be hanging on Mary's arm, the young man went away much encouraged by these signs of nervousness. He had something of Helen's feeling that when the time came Mary could not possibly refuse such an honor as he would one day offer her.

Mary was very quiet on the short train journey northward to the point where they met the lake boat. The Peterson girls chatted away in their corner, the two men in theirs, and Mary sat beside Mrs. Peterson. The heat and the strenuous work of getting her family off for a holiday had made the good lady doze. Mary looked out of the window watching the racing fields fly by, deep foreboding in her eyes. The train was running straight north into a belt of forest, the fields were growing smaller and fewer. Finally they disappeared, and the train was running through a long forest lane that grew narrower with each mile. There had been fires here and they fled through burned and blackened areas where the air was dense with smoke. Mary's oppressed heart recognised a similarity to her own life. She was shut in to one narrow track, the blackened forest walls were closing in on her.

The car grew hotter, the smoky air was stifling. She felt suffocated in body and soul. How was she to escape? What else was there to do but the thing that everyone wanted her to do? It would make Uncle John supremely happy, and Helen, and even Peter. And David did not care. She turned di-

rectly to the window to hide the smarting tears that with the dust and the smoke were blinding her eyes.

Suddenly she felt a reviving breath of air. A thrill of new life seemed to run through the car. Everyone sat up and looked about. Mary leaned out and inhaled a great breath of cool air. Far ahead down the track shone the silver expanse of Lake Huron. The brakeman came down the aisle shouting the name of the port where they were to meet the lake steamer. And the next moment the train had broken from the confining forest out into space and light and freedom and was running along the sand, swept by the cool breezes from the great inland sea!

Mary was smiling as she rose from her seat. God would open out the way for her. Somewhere ahead were freedom and light—and love!

They all came back at the end of the month, brown and wind-blown and ready for work. Helen had arrived the day before, and was staying with Mrs. Harding. Even in the rapture of meeting her sister again Mary could not help feeling that Rich. Harding was much too conspicuous in Helen's tales of all the wonderful doings of the Loch Lomond House.

"You look tired, dear," Mary cried. "Have you been trying to keep up with the Clarkson girls?"

"I am just a bit fagged," Helen confessed. "Life is dreadfully strenuous up there. It's good to get

home again. Mary, Mr. Douglas was at the station when we came in last night. He was leaving for Toronto but will be right back. He told me to tell you he was sorry not to be here to welcome you and Uncle Sutherland home. Oh, Mary he's so very kind and nice."

"It was nice of him to go away anyway," was Mary's discouraging answer.

On the very evening of their return she ran out to see Bertha and her family and afterwards down to Sawdust Alley. The long drought had dried even the green ditches, and there was not a blade of grass in any of the gardens. The mills seemed to make more noise than ever and the trains more black dust. The flies and the dirt, the crying children, and the untidy women, the fence with the circus posters, and the sorry row of grim grey houses seemed so much worse after the free glad spaces of the Great Lakes. But there was one beautiful thing in Sawdust Alley; Mary's welcome blossomed out like a lovely flower all along the ugly street. From Danny Greeves who wept aloud at the sight of her, to Shifty Sal who had moved into the tumbled down hut at the end of the row, and opened her sagging door to greet her, everyone received her with heart-warming delight. And when the little McCann girls came shrieking down the street to meet her, followed closely by Lance and Sammy leaping hys-

terically in the war chariot, her reception was complete.

But she found to her dismay that the whole Mill Flats were already under way with their usual autumn epidemic. The Quinsys were all down with typhoid fever, and two of the Jones family and one of the La Plantes were victims also.

Mary met Dr. Peterson at the door of the Carter home. "Confound the people anyhow," he cried. "I can't turn my back for a week's holiday but they all go and get sick! Dr. Fergus tells me they haven't had a drink of decent water since we left! Both Johnny Petatie's wells went dry, and he warned them not to touch the river water without boiling it, but can you imagine Madame La Plante or the Carter kids remembering to do it? They've been drinking sewage for weeks and now we're in for a time!"

Mary went home with a heavy heart. It was not lightened the next day when Mrs. McCann came to help her and Helen put the house in order after being shut up for a fortnight. Mrs. McCann looked pale and tired and had lost her usual cheeriness.

"Oh, I'll be all right soon's the cool weather comes," she said pluckily, when Mary questioned her. "It's jist the heat's give me a kinda headache."

On the second evening, after a hard day's work the girls set the tea table in the cool shade of the veranda. They were lingering over it under the

vines, while Helen related the delights of a season in a Muskoka hotel, and Uncle John argued that there was no place like home, and he was never going away any more, when the back gate swung open, and a rough-looking young man came slouching up the walk. A ragged cap was pulled down over his eyes, a disreputable-looking dunnage bag slung over his stooped shoulders.

The manse was always the refuge of tramps, and such a visitor was not an unusual sight, but there was something unusually disreputable about this one. He stood at the bottom of the steps, his head hanging.

"Could ye give a fella somethin' to eat?" he growled, without looking up.

And then, before Dr. Sutherland could answer, Mary gave a scream, and jumping from her seat, flung herself down the steps right into the tramp's arms. And the young ruffian dropped his bag, and clutching hold of her, danced her round and round in a mad whirl. And when they were quite out of breath, and the wild dance had to end, there was Peter, an inch taller at least, straight and strong and rugged, with his eyes shining from his brown and burned face.

Even in the rapture of his unexpected return Helen could not but regard him with something like dismay.

"He looks very well, of course," she admitted as

she and Mary prepared his supper, while sounds of splashing came from overhead. "But a rough life leaves its marks on a boy so. I do hope Peter hasn't forgotten all his table manners."

He hadn't forgotten the use of a knife and fork, at least. For when his supper was ready and they all sat around him just for the pleasure of hearing and seeing him, it seemed as if he could never get enough to eat.

They had got away a few days earlier than they expected, he explained, between slices of bread and meat, and he hadn't had time to send word. He and Dave and another fellow paddled and portaged to the landing where they caught the afternoon train. Dave had to come on business, something about a bridge they were going to put up.

This was the news Mary had been waiting for. He was home; everything would be explained. Peter's tongue was running on. Oh, but he had the dandy time. But work! Well! Why, he bet he did a month of a day's work every morning before the girls were out of bed. Dave Hunter was a regular steam roller himself. But there was no life like it.

Yes, Peter had decided once for all to be an engineer. Dave said he'd give him a job every summer while he was in college. Why, he saw a bear as near to him as Uncle John; and he could have shot a moose without the least bit of trouble, and would

have, too, only it was out of season. And they ought to see the beavers! And Jerry and Terry, Dave's tame hawks. And the cats! The cook was a dandy. Had been chef in a swell hotel in New York, but couldn't keep from drink and Johnny Petatie got hold of him and sent him up to Dave. And the pies he would make! Yes sir, there was nothing like a life in the bush; and how he was going to dress up in a hard tomb-stone of a collar and a boiled shirt and imprison himself in a school next week was something too horrible to contemplate.

"You'd like David Hunter better the more you knew him, wouldn't you?" Dr. Sutherland asked happily.

Like him? Peter went off into rapturous descriptions of David's prowess with the axe, his knowledge of the woods, his power over men, his way with animals—if they could only see Jerry and Terry coming down when he whistled to them! Mary looked so pleased that Helen managed to change the subject, feeling that Peter was going too far.

But it was impossible to stop the flow of adulation very long. Peter was off on his favourite subject the next morning as soon as he was out of bed. He slept like one dead far into the morning and his sisters went about on tip-toe not to disturb him. There was a wonderful breakfast awaiting him, all the dainties he could not possibly obtain at camp,

and he voted Molly just as good a cook as the New York chef. He talked as hard as he ate and the girls could do no housework and Dr. Sutherland left his sermon to listen. There were great tales to be told about shooting rapids and carrying loads on portages, of a wonderful adventure with a bear and another with a rattle-snake. And always David Hunter stood in the centre of the picture, the hero of every achievement. Now he was saving a man from drowning, now risking his life trying the rapids before anyone else was allowed to go down, now rescuing a member of the crew who had wandered away and been lost for a day and a night.

"How's Molly's Midas getting on?" asked Peter, when breakfast was at last over and he found himself alone with Helen.

"Mr. Douglas? Oh, Peter, please don't speak of him in that way. He's been away a great deal this summer, but he's just as kind as ever. I hope you won't mention his name in connection with Mary's, dear. It would never do yet, you know."

"I never peeped to a soul, except Dave. I told him one night when he was talkin' about Molly. I thought he seemed kinda interested. But I told him it was a secret."

"I really wish you hadn't said anything, dear," said Helen, very much worried. "Because there is really nothing to tell yet. Don't mention it to Mary," she added in some distress. "She wouldn't

like it, I know. And you never know what she is going to do."

Peter promised with an easy mind, and went off down town to find Billy Coles and the other fellows and make them envious by the tales of his great adventures with bear and moose. He came back in a state of starvation long before dinner was ready, and helped Mary hasten the food upon the table.

"I saw Dave, down at the office," was the welcome information he volunteered. "He says he's got to go back in two or three days. Oh, say, I feel like runnin' away when I think of him goin' back alone. But I'm goin' up there with him next summer, you bet. And say, the money he paid me! I know I didn't earn it, but he said I worked like a Trojan. You can't call me lazy any more, Miss Molly."

Mary waited eagerly all day for some word from David. He would be sure to communicate with Peter at least. She resisted all invitations to leave the house. Bertha telephoned asking her to come to tea, the Peterson girls invited her to go for a paddle in the evening, and Helen coaxed her to come to the Country Club for a game of tennis. Mary was not to be moved, but the long day passed and David did not come, neither was there any message from him.

She had promised Lancelot that she would be down the next afternoon, and she went early, hoping that she might meet even Johnny Petatie and learn

something, but affairs there drove all her own troubles out of her head. Poor Mrs. McCann had given all her employers the go-by for a season. She was lying in her hot little bedroom, flushed and fevered with a prostrating headache. Dr. Peterson had dropped in on his morning rounds and had pronounced her a victim of the typhoid epidemic. With a heavy heart Mary did what she could to relieve the poor sufferer. She took Sammy and the little girls out into the yard and kept them quiet with stories, while Lance ran up the hill to Mrs. Graydon to ask her to find someone to come and take charge.

Before the boy returned Johnny Petatie's light wagon drew up at the door and there alighted from it a portly capable-looking woman. The guardian of Sawdust Alley had been out on an errand of mercy as usual and Mrs. McCann was to be well cared for.

Mary ran out to the old man her hands outstretched. It seemed as if things couldn't go dreadfully wrong when Johnny Petatie was there.

"Eh, eh, the Angel!" he cried, his blue eyes dancing like a child's. "Now we will be all right, we've got our Angel back again. And you are looking so well. And how is the Doctor? Did he get a good rest?"

There were many questions to ask on both sides, but Mary dared not ask the one she most of all desired to ask. The old man answered it for her however.

"And we've got our boy home, though it's only for a day or so," he cried as he was leaving. "The Father gives him back to us once in a while when he sees our hearts are wearying. We did not expect him this time and the Mother is that happy! You must come out and look at her. You will know something of our joy because you have your own boy back, Davy tells me."

Mary could not trust herself to ask further. She must just wait and hope. She left the nurse in charge and went up the long hot length of the avenue to the shade of the hills.

He would surely come in the evening or send some message. She felt a kindred spirit with the hot thirsty earth that was longing so for the rain. But the evening brought a fresh trial. As they sat on the veranda after supper, Graham Douglas came up the garden walk. Would they come for a run in his launch? he asked. The *Shagata* was lying at the dock just waiting for passengers.

It was impossible for Mary to concoct an excuse under Helen's suspicious eye. There was nothing to do but go, and yet she was sure David would come and perhaps he would ask her to go for a paddle. She stood at the wheel guiding the *Shagata* over the smooth, glassy floor of the lake as unwillingly as any galley slave chained to his seat. And it would have added something to her misery had she known that as they surged past the dock, David

Hunter was watching her from where he was standing with a group of men.

She hurried home to find that, as she had feared, he had been there. He ran in for just a moment, Dr. Sutherland said. He had asked for Peter, and when he found he was out he had left a note for him.

"Sorry to have to leave without seeing you," it said. "We have to be off by the 5.30 train tomorrow morning. And I don't think I shall be back for some weeks, at best."

There was something about his missing Peter and wishing he could come, and the note ended with a message to Dr. Sutherland and the young ladies. "Tell Miss Mary I am sorry I had no time to join one of her picnics," was all the special notice Mary received.

Well, it was all over, she told herself as she lay awake in the night, looking at the moonlight on his picture of the Ivory Palace. She had been a sentimental fool after all and was being rightly punished. He had sailed past her in his canoe, and because he had lingered a little to smile and talk she had been silly enough to think he cared and would always come back. Well, she would show him that it was all nothing to her and, after all, she didn't really care, their acquaintance had been so brief. And, having come to this very sensible conclusion, Mary buried her face in her pillow and cried very softly

lest she waken Helen, cried herself so wide awake over the loss of her golden dream that the sparrows were twittering in the trees at her window before she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

MICE AT PLAY

HELEN'S sisterly eye could not but notice the signs of grief on Mary's face. Something was worrying the little sister; she half-guessed the cause and was even more kind and considerate than usual. And though Mary found it impossible to confide her trouble even to Helen she understood the unspoken sympathy and was grateful.

"Perhaps she has made up her mind to give him up, and is worried because she thinks she has hurt his feelings," Helen speculated, trying not to feel some qualms of conscience. What if Peter's busy tongue had been the cause of the trouble? Helen was not sufficiently worldly minded to permit of her taking any part in a scheme to separate Mary and the young woodsman no matter how objectionable he might be.

"I wonder if I ought to tell her," she thought. "If she mentions his name I will," she finally decided.

But Mary did not mention his name to anybody, and Helen soon forgot her resolve in the absorption of her own romance. For Richmond Harding was giving her no time to think about other people's

affairs, and she was just a little troubled and disappointed. She told herself that she ought to be as happy over her own good fortune as she was over Mary's. The Hardings were almost as important as the Clarksons. Richmond was employed in his father's bank, and was considered the most eligible young man in the town next to Mr. Douglas. And yet Helen found herself often wishing he could talk about something besides horses and cars.

Then there was no doubt that Mary had anything but a high opinion of him and was at no pains to hide her sentiments.

"Oh, dear me, Helen!" she declared as her sister came from the telephone. "Is that Rich Harding again? He was here last night, surely he's not going to live here!"

Helen smiled and dimpled. "I don't complain when Mr. Douglas comes."

"You don't need to. I can do all the complaining on that subject myself. But, oh, Nell, I wish you wouldn't waste your time on that fellow!"

"Why? The Hardings are very fine people, Mary, and Richmond——"

"He reminds me of that young man Dr. Samuel Johnson disliked so. Don't you remember Uncle John reading about him last night? The old Doctor said, 'That young man seems to have just one idea and it's a wrong one'."

Helen flushed, and Mary feared she had gone too

far. She dropped the subject, but Peter took it up upon every possible occasion. Whenever Mr. Harding called he threw his sister into an agony of apprehension by singing with great emphasis a stanza of his favourite song, "Richard of Taunton Dean."

He came into the parlour one evening to find Helen dressed for a ride, and waiting at the window for Richmond's car. Peter sat down to the piano and accompanying himself with one finger bawled forth,

"Last New Year's Eve as I've 'eard zay,
Young Richard 'ee mounted 'iz Dobbin Gray,
An' 'ee rode away to Taunton Dean
To coort da Parson's daughter Zhean,
Wi' a doomble-doom doorie doomble-doom day!

Mary had scarcely time to silence him before the young man was at the door, and scarcely time to get him and Helen beyond ear-shot before Peter was roaring a second stanza.

"Now I be honest, though I be poor,
And I've never been in love a-foor,
But Mother zent me 'ere to woo
An' I can vanzy none but you,
Wi' a doomble-doom doorie doomble-doom day!"

"Oh, Pete," gasped Mary trying hard not to laugh. "Come on to your lessons, you're all wrong because he's not poor, and he's been in love a dozen time afoor."

"Say," exclaimed Peter as they seated themselves on the back veranda steps with a pile of books between them, "Nell isn't thinkin' of hitchin' up with that dude, is she?"

"Oh, mercy, I hope not," groaned Mary, "I'd as soon think of marrying a glass of skimmed milk. Gertrude Graydon likes him. I do wish Helen would leave him to her."

"It would be a bottle of vinegar marrying a glass of milk, then," pronounced Peter. He had long since lost his early admiration for Miss Graydon. That young lady's acidity of manner had been too much for Peter's loyalty.

"How about the Merchant of Venice?" asked Mary who was not to be led down the pleasant paths of conversation during study periods. Peter had started to school the week before and was finding its restrictions very wearisome indeed.

"The Merchant of Venice, who's he? Don't think I care to know him. I have no use for merchants of any kind; a life in the bush for mine. I tell you what, you girls don't know a fine fellow when you see one. Dave Hunter's worth a dozen Rich Hardings and as many more Graham Douglasses with the saw-mill thrown in."

"Do attend to your lessons, dear," beseeched Mary tremulously. Little did Peter guess how earnestly she agreed with him. For a moment confidences trembled on her lips. Then pride forbade. "Bertha

said you ought to study the selections from *The Merchant of Venice*, she's putting on an examination on Friday."

She opened the book inexorably. Peter's eyes strayed down the back garden. "Say, Molly, there's a perfect mess o' Pine Warblers in the cedars behind the stable. Want to have a look at them? Their nest is the funniest thing——"

"Where shall we begin?" asked Mary sternly.

"I don't care where you begin; it's where you'll end that interests me." He took the book wearily. "Here, start anywhere. I like that chap Launcelot best of any of them. Let's 'try confusions' with him."

They spent an hour with Shakespeare and when Mary left Peter to his Algebra, Portia's complaint repeated itself over and over in her heart,

"I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike."

September brought no relief from the drought and heat. Forest fires raged in the north and the town lay under a pall of smoke. The summer campers lost their way in the haze of the lake as they folded their tents and paddled homeward.

Just the last week of the holiday season, before the summer visitors had all departed, St. Stephen's seized the occasion to make some money for the bell fund. A golden opportunity for the ladies to do as they pleased with the church arose and was too good

to be missed. For the first time in his history as guardian of St. Stephen's, McWhirter took a vacation. In a weak moment he yielded to the wiles of a nephew in Toronto, and accepted his invitation to come and see the Exhibition.

No sooner had the train for the south borne him away than Mrs. W. J. Clarkson was at her telephone calling up the executive of the Women's Association. And he had scarcely entered the gates of Ontario's great fair before St. Stephen's had all their preparations for a monster garden party on the church lawn completed.

Since the unfortunate visit of the Governor General, there had been no time for church affairs. One was kept busy maintaining one's social position. But the disturbance had gradually subsided. The Ellwoods had left the church, Mrs. Harding had been very kind to the Costly Clarksons in Muskoka, and Mrs. Kirkwall could be counted on to forget old feuds even when she might not be inclined to forgive. Mrs. W. J. resumed her old position of leadership and summoned the ladies of St. Stephen's young and old to raise some money for the long neglected bells.

On the evening before the garden party, while the young ladies decorated the school room and made Chinese lanterns to hang in the trees, Mary went down to Sawdust Alley to sit for a couple of hours with Mrs. McCann and relieve the nurse. As

she passed the church lights were streaming from the Sunday school windows, and gay laughing voices floated out. Katherine Clarkson and a young man in white flannels came hurrying out and crossed the church lawn.

"Everybody come over the minute you've finished," she called back. "Billy and I'll get the rugs up."

Mary experienced a strange pang of loneliness, the feeling that she was left out of all the happy doings of youth. She suddenly felt old and forsaken. Perhaps Helen was right and she really was queer.

But she entirely forgot her own affairs when she arrived at Mrs. McCann's. The woman who was caring for her and several other victims of the fever had gone to spend the night with the Carter family who needed her most. Mrs. McCann lay tossing about, hot and restless. Mary tip-toed about striving to bring a cool breath of air into the oven-like little house, remembering resentfully that nearly everyone in St. Stephen's who lived on the hill owned an electric fan. But here there was no electricity and only the smoky little kerosene lamp that added to the heat. She put Sammy and the little girls to bed in the stifling, low-ceiled room upstairs, while Lancelot sat beside his mother, and watched her with big, anxious eyes. When she had at last fallen into a light sleep, Mary and her little knight sat out

on the steps trying to get a breath of cool air. The mills were silent, but trains shunted up and down in front of them. The narrow steps of every house were filled with loud-voiced women; and children still played out in the roadway. From the mill boarding house next door came sounds of revelry that the heat could not subdue. A fiddle was scraping out a thin, raucous tune, that somehow had a strange alluring lilt, and dancing figures whirled past the lighted windows.

Early that morning Graham Douglas, W. J. Clarkson and the foreman of the mill had all gone down to Toronto on business, and a holiday spirit hung over Sawdust Alley. Mary noticed a figure in the dusk of the Boarding House yard that looked not unlike old 'Poleon LaPlante, the night watchman.

The fiddler was taking a breath on the porch, but the young folk inside were still on with the dance. Young Tommy Quinsy, who had not changed his thrilling Italian voice when he Canadianised his name, was singing the "Carnival" in a full rich tenor, accompanied by the wail of a cheap phonograph and the stamping of feet:

"Lights are gleaming on the Grand Canal;
Come, Love, come, and see the Carnival."

"When I get big," Lancelot announced, "I'm goin' to play the fiddle at dances. Say, it's great."

"I think it's time all little boys were in bed," said

Mary, stroking his fair stubby hair. "And you won't forget to say your prayers, will you, Lance?"

"I won't if you want me to say 'em," he answered, rising reluctantly. "But I don't think it's much use, do you?"

"Not much use to say your prayers? Oh, Lance!"

"Well, it ain't," he argued, fingering the rusty latch of the door. "I prayed every night that Ma wouldn't get sick and she just up an' took the fever. And I prayed that the cabbages would grow, and——"

"But, Lance, dear, God is our Father and He knows what we ought to have and——"

"Did He think Ma ought to have the fever, then?" he asked.

"Come and sit down here for a minute and let's talk about it," she said.

The boy dropped upon the step again beside her, very willingly. Of all life's disagreeable duties Lancelot McCann disliked going to bed the most. It was a difficult task this, reconciling God with the hard surroundings in which the boy had been placed; but there were some human beings whose lives spoke of Him. Mary started with Johnny Petatie and all the wonderful things he taught in the Sunday school. And sitting there, in the noisy, hot, dirty little street, the boy looked up at the few dim stars shining faintly through the smoke, and learned the greatest lesson of his life, that somewhere, behind

all contradictions, his Father stood "within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

He went to bed at last, still reluctant, and Mary continued her watch alone. If Mrs. Proctor could not come back, Mrs. Moore's daughter had promised to come in and sleep at the McCanns'. But Mary knew that Gladys would not make her appearance until the dance was over. The fiddler was having refreshments once more, and Tommy and the one record of the phonograph were at it again. He was singing with a yearning alluring note that Caruso might have envied.

"Mem'ry wakes with a ling'ring sigh,
And hearts have tears for the days gone by,
Only the scent of a few faded flowers
Bring back the dream of those vanished hours,
The wild glad hours, the fleeting hours, . . ."

Mary's heart grew heavy. Youth was slipping away from her. Up on the hill the girls and boys seemed gay and happy. She was down here, cut off from the companionship of her fellows by the insistent demands of the helpless and the unfortunate. And her bright, glad hours had vanished, too, leaving only memories, the scent of the cedars behind the Ivory Palace and the fresh breath of the shining lake.

A slow step was coming along the little sidewalk, and Johnny Petatie came up the street from the Carter home. Poor Lily, the motherless girl,

whose careless feet had wandered into forbidden paths, was lying very near the entrance to that path that leads into the Valley of the Shadow, while her gay comrades who had helped her to wander danced her night of death away. There had only been Johnny Petatie and the nurse with her, but he had been able to whisper a few words about the Good Shepherd who left the ninety and nine in the fold and went out on the mountains to seek his one sheep that had gone astray.

Mary could see in the light from the boarding house windows that the old man's face was drawn and weary, though his eyes were alight with a great peace.

"Ah, the Angel!" he cried, pausing in front of the steps. "Dear, dear. It is too late for you down here, my dear young lady. What will the Doctor say? He will be anxious."

"Oh, Uncle John knows where I am," Mary said coming down to join him. "I just came down to stay till Mrs. Proctor comes back. You ought to be home and in your bed, Mr. Hill. You look tired."

"Tut, tut, I could say the same to you. Now you just run away home and let me stay. Mrs. Proctor can't leave poor Lily to-night; but you mustn't dim your beautiful eyes sitting up late like this. The Mother never expects me home till morning, anyway. She says I am getting to be a regular old prowler.

But Mary would not listen to this. "No, no, indeed! Mrs. McCann is sleeping quietly, and Gladys will come in as soon as the dance is over. And you needn't order me home, because I just won't go."

Johnny Petatie threw up his hands helplessly. "The young people of this generation!" he cried. "You can do nothing with them. And I was considered quite a disciplinarian in my day. Well, well, I'm afraid I'd make but a poor school master now with such headstrong youth."

"Indeed you do far too much for your strength," Mary declared affectionately. "You ought to take care of yourself. Sawdust Alley can't get along without you."

"Tut, tut!" he cried cheerily. "You would be like Davy and make me sit in an arm chair and twiddle my thumbs. Eh, did I tell you Davy'll be home to-morrow night? He wrote that he would leave this morning. I was telling the mother that he would likely be caught in the rain. We need it so and we have been all praying and I feel the Father is going to send it very soon. I could see signs to-night. There was a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but that was enough for Elijah. Yes, I believe the Father will send us rain before another twenty-four hours."

Mary sat down on the steps when he had gone; her eyes were shining. He would soon be here, and then there would be some explanation. The eternal

spirit of youth that refused to stop hoping whispered that her Carnival was still gleaming ahead. She suddenly found that she was not tired at all, and that her heart was keeping time with the lilting song from next door:

“Oh! It is all delightful!
Bright as a poet's dream,
Singing upon our way,
Drifting along the stream.”

It was late when the dance was over and Mrs. Moore's daughter in a soiled pink organdie, limping on her high-heeled shoes came in to take charge.

“Gee, I'm too dead to bury!” she cried, sinking upon the steps beside Mary and fanning herself with a newspaper.

“I'm sorry, Gladys,” Mary said sympathetically. “You're too tired to be disturbed to-night. If you'll telephone home for me, I'll stay.”

“No, siree you won't!” cried Gladys generously. “You hustle home out o' this. I'm used to sittin' up nights, ma says,” she giggled consciously. “I ain't a bit tired, only my feet. Say, that there Tommy Quinsy, he *is* the limit. He can sing and play the fiddle all in one breath. Now, you get away home, Miss Erskine. You look all wore out.”

Mary left her in charge, grateful for the love and kindness that bloomed in such an unlikely place as Sawdust Alley.

She had no fear of the men who lounged about the lumber yards and the street. They were all her friends; but as she passed Mrs. Greeves' dark little house she was slightly disturbed to discern a figure coming around from behind the sheds that bordered the mill yards.

"Why, Danny! Are you not in bed yet?" she cried, relieved to see it was one of her friends.

"Nope, I'm just goin'," he stammered. There was an air of secret triumph about him. "Ho, ho!" he laughed. "Maw's goin' to get better now! Doc. Peterson said that's the only thing that'd cure her."

"What?" asked Mary, peering at him.

His face, lit up by the headlight of a passing engine, fairly shone with joy. But he glanced at her cunningly. "Doc. Peterson said so," he repeated, "and he knows."

"Oh, poor Danny!" cried Mary. "Run away in and go to bed. Good-night." But she could not help feeling a little anxious over this strange behavior, especially as she could hear his foolish laughter until she had crossed the tracks. Mary sometimes found herself fearing for Danny. He often brought to mind the ghostly word of warning to Scrooge concerning the boy named Ignorance.

"Beware the Boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BOY NAMED IGNORANCE

MARY sank into the deep sleep of utter weariness almost as soon as her head touched the pillow. The moonlight from the street shone softly on David's picture of the Ivory Palace, she seemed to float away down its magic aisles to the lilting lines of the song that had followed her up the hill,

"Oh it was all delightful, bright as a poet's dream
Singing along the way, drifting adown the stream"

And then it seemed the very next minute that she was in the midst of noise and light and someone was calling her name. She felt Helen shaking her, heard Peter's voice at the bed-room door, and awoke to find the windows filled with a glaring light, and the air clamorous with the din of the fire-bell.

"Oh, Mary, it must be the mills!" cried Helen, who was already at the window. "Oh, how dreadful for Mr. Douglas."

"Oh, oh, Sawdust Alley!" cried Mary, leaping from her bed.

Away down in the direction of the Mill Flats an angry red glow painted the sky, sparks soared into

the air and a great tower of smoke slowly moved over the town.

"What can it be?" cried their uncle, hurrying to the stairs. "Thank God there is no wind!"

Peter came running up the stairs half-dressed. He had been at the telephone.

"It's the saw mill!" he shouted. "And it's spreading over the lumber yard. I'm going down!"

He dashed into his room and began flinging on his clothes.

"I'm going too, Pete!" called Mary, who was dressing in mad haste. "Yes, I must," she cried in answer to Helen's protests. "Mrs. McCann—oh, think of poor Mrs. McCann and Lily Carter!"

She was dressed in an incredibly short time, and racing down the stairs at Peter's side.

"Be careful, children!" called their uncle. "Peter, don't go too near! Mary, wait a moment and I'll go with you!"

But they were already gone, with a bang of the front door, and were speeding across the church lawn. The glow in the sky was mounting in flames now, and cinders were falling around them as they raced down the hill.

It was three o'clock in the morning, but the whole town was awake and pouring into the streets.

"It's the mills! There's no hope of saving them!" came from all sides.

It was indeed hopeless looking. As they dashed

across the railroad tracks the great saw-mill came into view—a tower of flame. Mary was possessed with a sudden wonder at the quietness of it all. Around her, people pushed and ran and shouted; but from the great Terror before them there came only a swishing sound, as of uprushing pinions. Wings of flame flew higher and higher and a great cloud of silent smoke rolled up over the town. Mary stood spellbound. It was all so terribly beautiful, so awesome in its quiet, resistless power. The shouts of the firemen rang out above the crackling flames, and their little streams of water rose pitifully into the air and disappeared into the cauldron unnoticed. Even where Mary stood she could feel the blasts of heat on her face.

Suddenly she caught sight of Bertha struggling through the crowd and sprang towards her.

“Oh, Mary, we must get to Mrs. McCann!” she cried, “and no one is allowed to pass the store! The fire has caught the old sheds behind Danny’s and it’s likely to spread all up the street!”

The firemen were holding back the crowd, but Bertha and Mary knew another way into Sawdust Alley. They had often taken it when the spring floods made the ordinary road impassable.

With Peter far in advance they ran back across the tracks, and around behind the sheds and warehouses to the back lane where Shifty Sal lived. Here a path led across the tracks to a point near the old

ruined house at the end of the Alley. But here again the fireman would allow no one to pass. The road to Johnny Petatie's was open, however, and crowded with all the inhabitants of the Alley who were pouring out of their threatened homes carrying their furniture, the glow of the flames lighting up the hurrying figures. In the distracted procession Mary caught sight of Mrs. Moore, whose house had so lately been the scene of revelry. She was trundling her dining-room crockery very carefully in a wheel-barrow. Mary ran to her with questions regarding the sick.

"Johnny Petatie came down first thing with his wagon an' had 'em all moved up to his place," Mrs. Moore shouted above the noise. "An' Dr. Peterson's there lookin' after them." Yes, the Quinsy children had been taken, too, and Grandpa Jones and Lily Carter; and old Mother Greeves had been taken up town. But, oh, wirra, wirra, what a night it was, and all their homes would be burned down over their heads, and how were the men to get a bite, poor craters, with her turned out of house and home, and all her best dishes like to be smashed to smithereens?

Peter steadied the precarious load over the rough road, and Mrs. Moore made her way safely to the harbour of all the outcasts—Johnny Petatie's home. The garden was lit up with the red glare, and crowded with household furniture, distracted people,

and crying children. Johnny Petatie moved about among them helping, comforting, encouraging. Mary and Bertha made their way through the crowded house. The sick were stretched out on sofas and beds and even the floor, and Dr. Peterson was ordering all able-bodied people out of the house, except those who were prepared to care for the helpless ones.

Old Mrs. Hill sat in her chair and tried to speak a word of comfort to all around her. The burning cinders were falling about her own home, but she remained undisturbed. As Mary stopped to speak to her, Johnny Petatie slipped behind her chair and disappeared through a door that led to a loft above the kitchen.

"Did you see father?" whispered the old woman, closing the door carefully after him. "I sit on guard here, and he slips away up to the loft whenever he can get away. He's praying for rain, and he'll get it, too," she cried, her eyes shining. "I watch and knock on the door whenever he's needed down here."

Mary had been looking about anxiously for Lancelot and Sammy, and made her way into the bedroom where Mrs. McCann lay. The three little girls were clustered around her bed, little Annabel crying hysterically. Mrs. McCann's hot hands clutched Mary.

"Oh, I knew you'd come!" she cried bursting into sobs. "Oh, Miss Mary, where's my baby? Where's

Sammy and Lencie? Nobody knows where they are."

"Mrs. Quinsy says that Mrs. Moore took them across the tracks to the Andersons," said Bertha soothingly. "I'm sure they'll be safe, Mrs. McCann."

But Mary jumped up. "I'll go and find them, and bring them right here," she cried cheerfully. "Mrs. Moore's just down in the garden, she'll find them for me."

She was gone in a moment and Mrs. McCann folded her hot hands and lay back on her pillow.

"They'll be all right, if Miss Mary gets after them," she sighed.

Mary ran down the path that crossed the vegetable garden to the Bethlehem well, where she had last seen Mrs. Moore. She paused a moment to admire Peter staggering gallantly towards the gate with Grandpa Jones' bed on his back. She glanced back at the old white house standing out in the red light of the fire; and at the window above the kitchen she caught a glimpse of old Johnny Petatie. His head was bowed over his clasped hands, the rosy glow touching his white hair. Instinctively Mary moved on softly—the old saint was petitioning his Father for the merciful rain that would save the town.

It was no easy task to find anyone in the confusion of carts, horses, furniture, shouting people and cry-

ing children that crowded the road. A clatter of crockery and a loud Irish voice bewailing a broken glass pitcher finally guided Mary to a fence corner where the lady of the boarding house stood guard over her perishable household goods.

To Mary's disappointment she could give no definite information. Old Jinny Anderson had taken all the Jones kids and the Carter kids and most o' the Frenchies that wasn't sick acrost the tracks to her place; and she told her she was going to take Lancie McCann and the baby; but that young spalpeen, Lance, was off like a will-o'-the-wisp, and the saints knew where he was by this time. But it was a fearsome night, and she'd have niver a whole plate or cup left by the time morning came, and what would the poor craters do for a bite o' breakfast?—

Mary pushed her way through the crowd unheeding, and ran against Danny Greeves, who was darting here and there in a state of wild excitement.

"Maw's been took up to W. J. Clarkson's!" he cried. "Ain't that fine? They've got pink silk curtains; an' it wouldn't a' happened if it hadn't a been for me!"—He suddenly clapped his hands over his mouth and looked at her cunningly.

"Danny, where's Lance and the baby? I can't find them."

Danny's face grew grave. He shook his big head. "Old Jinny Anderson went to get them, an'

she fell and sprained her ankle and then I don't know where they went."

Mary ran on down the road in deepening anxiety. Here the sparks and cinders were falling in showers. She had just come to the barrier placed by the fireman, when Lance burst out of the crowd and flung himself upon her. He was sobbing aloud.

"I can't find Sammy!" he screamed. "They won't let me through, an' he's burnin' up in the house. Old Mother Anderson left him to burn up——"

Mary caught the hysterical child in her arms. "Hush, hush, Lance, dear. He can't be there. Come! we'll find out!" she cried. Over beyond the barrier she caught sight of her friend, Wat Watson. He was mounted on an old shed behind Shifty Sal's house and was hacking furiously at it, his big muscular figure silhouetted against the flames. It was but a forlorn hope the firemen of Wawashene were leading against this monster, but Wat was doing his best even in his despair. Mary caught Lance by the hand and slipping under the barrier, ran towards him.

"Back out o' that!" he shouted, and then stopped. "Hi, Miss Erskine, it's you! It ain't safe here——"

"But we're worried about Mrs. McCann's baby, Wat. Lancie's afraid he's left in the house——"

"Naw, he ain't! All the kids was taken away hours ago. That house's caught now. You can't go down there. Hi, lookit, will ye?"

The tall smoke-stack leaned, toppled, and came down with a crash, and towers of flame sprang hissing into the air. All eyes were turned to it, but Mary saw something else. She saw Lance dart behind the fence, and the next instant he was away down Sawdust Alley towards his burning home, with the speed of the flames. And with no thought for anything but his danger, Mary sprang after him.

A few yards of a wild rush through the terrible heat and glare, brought her to Mrs. McCann's house. The old sheds at the back and the lean-to kitchen were in flames. She saw Lance make a dash at the front door, heard him give a wild shriek of terror, and, looking up, saw Sammy's little black, curly head and terrified face at the upstairs window. The boy disappeared within and Mary darted after him.

David Hunter had come out from camp to the Landing where he was to take the morning train. But as he and his companion settled their tent for the night in the woods hard-by, a red glow in the sky in the direction of home alarmed him. There was surely a terrible fire in Wawashene, and his father and mother might be in anxiety or even peril. So, leaving instructions with his fellow-traveller, he jumped upon a passing freight, made friends with the engineer, and rode into town. He made his way to the road beyond the mills, as Mary and Bertha had done, bewildered by the shouts of firemen, the cries of frightened children, the noise

of falling timbers, and that terrible rush of hot flame.

"Your folks is all safe, David!" cried old Mr. Evans stopping him in the crowd. "This is an awful night."

"And there's a wind getting up and straight for the town," cried another.

The old farmer shook his head. "That wind's goin' to bring rain. You think that's all smoke overhead, but there's more than smoke up there, let me tell you. Praise the Lord, He's going to send us a deluge before this spreads much fuder."

David would have liked to believe him, but there seemed no sign of the approaching blessing.

He was pushing his way homeward through the crowd, when he was suddenly arrested. It was the sight of a girl in a white dress, her hair gleaming bronze in the light of the flames that stopped him. She was talking to Danny Greeves, and as she turned away, David caught the boy by the arm.

"Hello, Dave! You home? Say, Maw's gone up to W. J. Clarkson's, mind ye, and there's roses in the carpet, an'——"

"Danny, here's fifty cents. Take this bag of mine up to my mother, like a good fellow—tell her I'm home safe, and will see her in a little while, but I want to help the folks."

Before Danny could express his wonder and joy over the money David was gone down the road in

the direction which Mary had disappeared. He lost sight of her again, in the confusion of wagons and horses and people, caught a glimpse of her hair once more, shining in the glare, lost it again, and finally came to the barrier in time to see her dart down the street after Lance, right into the heart of the fire area.

Mary could never tell afterwards how she followed Lancelot through the smothering heat and smoke up the ladder-like stair. She had a strange sensation of dashing forward in a wild dream where everything was unreal. She remembered afterwards that she had a mad search for Sammy, that she found him, where, she could not tell. She had a dim recollection of covering his head and her own in a blanket from the bed, and trying to call to Lance to do the same, of losing her way in the little rooms, and of finally finding the stair and sliding madly down it, clutching the struggling, smothering baby in her arms; of losing Lance and striving desperately to cry out to him and failing; of vainly trying to find the door; of staggering, choking, falling; and then of being suddenly caught up in a pair of strong arms, and borne out into the light where there was room for breath.

Then there was a blank, and afterwards the sensation of lying on something soft and cool, that must be grass. She did not wonder who had brought her there, or how it all happened. She only knew that David was somewhere near, so she felt no surprise

when she opened her eyes and saw him kneeling on the ground beside her.

"Sammy," she whispered. "Where's Sammy?"

"Here he is, safe and sound," David answered.

"Not a hair of him singed," cried Wat Watson, holding the baby up. "And if ever I seen a pluckier thing——"

But Mary was not listening to him. "And Lance? Did Lencie get out, David?" she asked. She knew as soon as she had said it that she should have said Mr. Hunter, but she felt that nothing mattered, now that David was here, he would understand.

"We've got Lance, too," David said. His voice was very gentle and soothing. "But now you must rest and we will get you home in a few minutes."

She was glad to shut her eyes again. She was conscious of a terrible pain in her head, and a burning in her chest. She could hear, as though they were miles away, the shouts of the firemen and the voices of people about her.

"Dave Hunter, he got them out. He got his hands burned, but she's all right." "Yes, the baby, but not Lance——"

Then she suddenly felt a heaven-sent breath of cool air, some blessed drops of water splashed into her face. She opened her eyes; David was spreading his coat over her, one hand was wrapped in a bandage.

"Hurry!" he was saying. "We must get her under cover."

It came just as they reached the porch of Johnny Petatie's home: the blessed rain for which the old man had been agonising in prayer. There was a faint rumble of thunder, a few flashes of lightning, unnoticed in the noise and glare of the fire, and then a gust of wind and suddenly the windows of heaven were opened and the floods let loose. There was a shout from the firemen, answered by cheers from the drenched crowds. Wat Watson, who was again fighting back the fire in the old sheds and fences, saw its outposts die hissing and protesting under his axe. He straightened himself, the water pouring from his helmet, and laughed aloud at the sight of the feeble trickle of the fire-hose mounting into the deluge. Down it roared and the ramparts of the fire sank beneath its onrush. The houses in Sawdust Alley turned black and glistening; the sheds and fences died out, hissing and steaming; the lumber yard became a smoking pond. The flour mill, where the firemen had put up a gallant fight, and where the fire fiend had driven them back, again and again, succumbed next to the glorious onslaught. Gasping and smoking, it faded into blackness. And now the great tower of flame from the saw-mill itself was mounting less fearfully, was faltering, was sending up hissing clouds of steam. Here and there a valiant flame would suddenly leap up, only to be beaten

down by the resistless oncoming of the hosts of heaven. In steam and smoke and growing blackness the fire flickered, glowed feebly, and died away. And still from the black heavens the glorious cataracts came roaring down. All night, and far into the grey morning, the blessed rain flooded the fire-swept area. When day had fully come it ceased; the sun smiled out over the grateful glistening earth; the long, weary drought was over; the world was created anew. But along the bank of the swollen river Graham Douglas wandered moodily, surveying the steaming ruin of the business he had spent his life in building up.

"You were right, Bertha," he was saying to himself bitterly. "If I had done as you told me and given Danny a chance. You were right!"

CHAPTER XXV

THE BELLS ARE RUNG

IT was Mrs. Graydon who called that first hurried meeting of the women of St. Stephen's, to see what could be done for the sick and the homeless and those who had been injured in the fire; but it was Mrs. W. J. Clarkson who moved that they turn the big airy rooms of St. Stephen's Sunday school into a temporary hospital, and Mrs. Ellwood who seconded it. It was carried unanimously; even the Young Ladies' Club voted for it. What if they had fixed the place up for an entertainment; no one cared about making money now. And for the first time in the history of St. Stephen's Mr. McWhirter upon his return gave full consent to unlimited meetings of the women of the congregation.

So cots and bedding were rushed down from the homes on the hills and the workers for the garden fête turned themselves into hospital nurses and for the first time in many years, the doors of St. Stephen's were wide open to the halt and the maimed, and they were ministered to within its walls.

But there was one patient that all the love and care of the nurses could not save. Mary's little

knight fought a gallant battle with pain and weakness, but his wounds were too deep. A few days after his knightly attempt to rescue his baby brother he passed on from his hard apprenticeship in Sawdust Alley to start a new training in the Palace of his King, in that radiant city that is full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Mary had been moved to her own home, and was able to walk about the house before they told her.

"He said over his motto before he went," her uncle told her gently, " 'Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King.' And you must not feel too sad because he has followed Him into a better place. Sawdust Alley might have proved too hard for your little knight."

It was a day all sunshine and tender amethyst haze when St. Stephen's laid Lancie to rest on the breezy, flowery heights above the town. They had left him down in the squalour of the streets during his short, hard life, but now they were giving him love and protection when it was too late.

"If he'd only had some of those flowers given to him earlier," sobbed Mary, as she sat by Mrs. McCann's bedside and watched the little blossom-strewn casket go down the church walk under the drooping elms.

But the roses on Lancie's grave were only the first buds of a garden that was growing up in St. Stephen's. The little hospital and its blessed work gave

the women a taste of the joy of service. And when they looked beyond their own walls immediately the work within those walls took on new life.

* * * * *

It was a golden October day, and McWhirter and Peter were disputing as to who should rake the leaves from No Man's Land, when the Minister of St. Stephen's,—that busy combination of school, hospital and charitable institution which was open seven days a week—came slowly across the church lawn, the scarlet and golden leaves falling gently upon his white hair.

"Here are all my dreams for St. Stephen's coming true!" he cried, stopping to greet his old friend the Doctor who was coming out from visiting his patients. They paused to watch a group of young women conducting a game of ring-around-a-rosy with Sammy McCann staggering in the centre.

"This is the work we should have set our hands to long ago. *'Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor that are cast out into thy house?'*"

"There's your text for next Sunday's sermon," cried his friend. "See that you give it to us strong."

The Doctor hurried away and the minister paused to greet his janitor.

"Well, well, Andrew?" he said pausing with a twinkle in his eye. "How is it you can put up with

so many women about the church all the time. The place is fairly swarming with them."

Mr. McWhirter disliked giving up a position he had once held. In his heart he was very proud of the women of St. Stephen's and the work they were doing among the poor and the outcast, but he would have seen the fine old building fall upon him in ruin ere he would confess his weakness. He frowned elaborately.

"Huh! The craters must be makin' a steer aboot something; so ah jist thoct if they're rummagin' an' racin' roond the kirk, they'll be less likely to be doin' hairm some other place."

The minister walked on, smiling knowingly. He paused at the gate to look down the Avenue. Mary had gone to bring his mail this afternoon and should have returned with it long ago. There she was now, coming very slowly indeed. David was with her, of course, and they would be sure to stand at the gate for quite another half-hour when they did arrive. Well, well, they were young, and David had not many more days at home; but seeing he had been up to the manse this morning already, and would be sure to come again in the evening, surely the young man need not delay His Majesty's mail so long. What would become of his reputation for punctuality, with a pair of lovers around his feet, yes two pairs of lovers, for there was Helen and that young Harding just as slow and forgetful as these two.

But indeed David and Mary had things of tremendous import to converse about.

"I really came up on a very important errand," David was saying. "I remember thinking how absolutely imperative it was at the time, but I can't for the life of me remember what it was now. You see, I didn't know you were going to have on a velvet toque the very colour of your eyes. You might have known it would make me forget everything."

It took him quite half an hour to remember it, and even then he had to be dragged away by Peter. Mary went running into the house with the mail flushed and hurried as though she had been in great haste.

"Letters, letters," she cried gaily. "Three for you and a paper, and one for us from Aunt Effie."

"'At last thou art come,'" quoted her uncle. "That young man out there doesn't seem to have the speed of Browning's David."

"Why, we fairly ran all the way," said Mary shamelessly. "If you're going to scold me, Uncle John, dear, do you mind waiting till I read Aunt Effie's letter, so you won't be hurried."

Aunt Effie's letter stated that she was surely coming home the end of October, not a week later. She had already outstayed her year's leave by several months and could hardly wait to see her children again. So they must write to Mayfair at once and have the house put in order, and she would come to

Wawashene first and see what was to be done about Peter. If Helen would rather remain and keep house for her Uncle Sutherland for a while, she might see about it on her return, but one of the girls must certainly get ready to move at once.

Mary slowly folded the letter and stood smiling into the glowing grate. Poor Aunt Effie, with her ungrateful girls! Neither of them would be very long with either her or dear Uncle John.

"There's a paper from the West, Mary, child," said her Uncle. "Something some of the brethren think I ought to read, I suppose. You read it, like a good girl, but don't tell me what it's about unless I have to know."

Mary laughed. Uncle John was notorious for his love of books and his dislike of newspapers. "It's all the way from Edmonton," she said. "'See page four.' I'm sure it's important so you'll have to listen." There was a short pause while he opened another letter. "Why, it's about our nice old Mrs. McTavish. Well, I never! Uncle John Sutherland! Just guess! Mrs. McTavish has been and gone and got married again—the Reverend Murdock MacNeill—a reverend—a minister!"

"Good gohens!" cried her uncle, lapsing into his one broad Scotch expletive. "She's got this one!" he added under his breath.

"Uncle John, you really shouldn't use such lan-

guage in my presence. But just think of it; Mrs. McTavish marrit! And marrit on a meenister!"

"Well, bless her heart. I hope she'll be happy. She'll make him a good tidy housekeeper. Mrs. McTavish was a faithful soul, and she did me one of the greatest kindnesses mortal ever showed another."

"Really? The old dear! What was it?"

"She made it possible for me to get you. And now you're talking of leaving me," he added reproachfully.

Mary flushed prettily. "But that's just what I want to speak about. Aunt Effie's written saying she's really and truly coming home next month, and that I've got to go home with her; and I think it was quite nice and obliging of me to arrange my affairs so that I could get back to live here for good and all."

"Ah, Mary II.!" he laughed, though his eyes were misty. "What a sly little fox you've been!" He leaned back in his chair and shook his head at her in tender reproof. "Well, I surely ought to feel grateful to David for keeping you, and you know my opinion of him. He comes nearer being worthy of you than any man I know. But you must write Aunt Effie this very night and tell her I won't hear of your going. Peter is getting on well in school. And here's Helen—I can't see the door for that young Harding—and you and David! Why, Mary, it's nonsense to think I could let either of

you go. I'd be murdered in my bed by at least two wild young men."

"And I couldn't leave St. Stephen's just now, either, with all our new work started, could I?" she added comfortably. "Yes, really, Uncle John, I don't see how you are going to get rid of us for a while. We'll just write and tell Aunt Effie all about everything and see what she says."

"It'll be wonderful to have you so near, Mary, just on the hill above me. I confess I had other dreams for you,—but I'm glad you were wiser than I. Money and position have no lure for you, my child."

Mary was silent. She was rather ashamed of the craven part she had played with Graham Douglas. She wished she had had the courage of her convictions.

"I've got a letter here from Graham. He writes me that the new mills are going on fast," Dr. Sutherland added, as though she had spoken. "He was wise not to rebuild here. The timber's gone. He's going to make good his losses in a few years, he tells me."

"And he's going to build pretty cottages for his men, all with gardens, and all different!" cried Mary eagerly.

"How do you know? You don't hear from him, do you?"

"No, but Bertha does. Only it's a secret. He writes to her every week, and Bertha got him to look

after poor Danny this time. It's all going to turn out like a fairy-tale. Well, Uncle John, if you're not going to turn us out right away, I think I'll run over to that meeting. Mr. McWhirter says we must be out of the room not a minute later than five o'clock. We're going to buy just a nice, plain bell for the tower, and not try to get chimes. Mrs. Harding says it's going to be a hard winter and we mustn't let Sawdust Alley happen again."

The minister walked to the window and watched her run across the leaf-strewn lawn. Rainbow showers were fluttering from the maples to the green below. The elms were all golden, and the vines on the church tower were turning purple and scarlet. The quiet, warm autumn day had in it the very spirit of rest and fulfilment.

Suddenly he hurried to the side door and threw it open. Johnny Petatie was coming up the garden path with a basket of cauliflowers and a sheaf of velvet dahlias. His face was radiant.

"I was just telling the Angel the good news! Your people have stolen my Sunday school. Every one of them is coming to St. Stephen's. And this is the end of Sawdust Alley. May the Lord be praised!"

"It is your prayers that did it, Johnny. Do you hear the Bells of St. Stephen's ringing?"

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